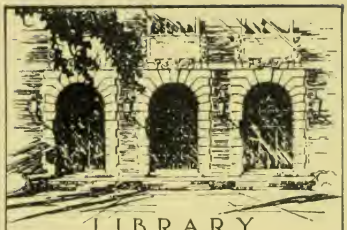

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BARBARA PHILPOT.

A Study of Manners and Morals.

(1727 TO 1737.)

BY THE

HON. LEWIS WINGFIELD,

AUTHOR OF
'LADY GRIZEL,' 'ABIGEL ROWE,' 'IN HER MAJESTY'S KEEPING,'
ETC.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

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BARBARA PHILPOT.

CHAPTER I.

'THE TABERNACLE OF SIN.'

IN how many ingenious ways may the human heart be wounded! Philosophy, which bids us seek out and dwell upon the better side of things, cannot so plunge her children in wisdom-water but that a heel will be vulnerable to danger from poisoned arrows.

The pilgrimage of a weak woman downhill is a lugubrious line for pen to trace. Yet, since we've looked on the bewitching Philpot when she fizzed across the firmament of Drury with fiery tail, 'tis only right to look upon her now—in guise of profitable lesson—deprived of tail, a mere expiring firework. Again must we bend our steps to incongruous Southwark—not to behold our wayward Barbara in

rustling sacque and sumptuous jewelled earrings, swimming into the Bearpit, or commanding a beau contingent among the fair-booths, but crawling over London Bridge in company with Theo, who had deftly arranged the matter of her moving, in a musty hackney-coach floored with damp hay, past the pillory and cage, round the miry corner of Foul Lane, through Deadman's Place to the portals of the Clink Prison.

She was stonier and prouder now even than when moping in the solitude of Cleveland Row. The questionable jests and anecdotes redolent of foot-lights, with which well-meaning Theophilus strove to beguile the tedium of the journey, entered unheeding ears, as with brows and lips tight set she frowned on the silver river, on the hoary tower of St. Saviour's—which had looked upon so much of human trouble—the reeking ditches, busy inns and cut-throat wynds of the strangest quarter of London.

To her strained fancy the fusty coach was a tumbril bearing her to execution; not the swift release of decollation, or even of a clumsy hanging, but slow lingering death, wherein the young spirit would battle for leave to remain in its still healthy tenement and be crushed out of it by inches.

Bab did not choose to look upon the matter in Theo's careless way. She knew that the coach was a hearse on its way to the churchyard, that once established here she might never be free again, and

marvelled at the foreshadowing vision which in happier days had lent a fascination to the spot.

To those among us who have a share in anything so ironically splendid, is it not with a curiously mixed feeling that we look on our family vault, at the chamber which, when our little time of fretting and trial is gone by, shall close on us—silent oasis in the midst of turmoil—and keep us till the last great day? Doth it not occur to us to think of what will happen in that darkened room when the last sorrowing relative (if any make believe to sorrow) shall have deposited his wreath and gone up the steps into the air, and the iron gates are closed, and the turf beaten down over the entrance? Will all the ancestors look up out of their niches and nod a welcome? Will they say, 'Lucky descendant! Has your turn come to escape from the mocking series of disillusions which make up human life?'—then drowsily sink back and sleep again?

I vow that when the relatives (wreaths deposited and tears decorously shed) have pulled off their black gloves and pocketed their handkerchiefs, and gone gaily off conversing about the last new play or some hitch in politics—relieved to have got rid of that unpleasant coffin—'tis the one under lock and key that's to be envied! For we're justified in supposing a hiatus—a respite—if not eternal rest. A part of us, at any rate, hath done with the battle.

For Bab's body there would soon be peace—that was the one gleam of consolation on which she chose to dwell while Theo prattled. And yet how hard, so young, so strong, so lovely—so capable of enjoying a world which, if absurd and unsatisfying, is beautiful! How hard to have to look beyond and sigh for worms and corruption!

If guilty now and again of fits of vacillation, of blenching and wincing under stripes, her bitterest enemy could not say that Bab was craven. At a moment of supreme trial she could put on a stony mask and bear without a quiver, looking straight into the abyss which was destined to receive her bones.

Theo, who was quite of another way of thinking, if equally careless and reckless, marvelled at the calm woman by his side, who did not trouble even to resent his well-intentioned fictions as to the life she was about to lead. She had insisted on dismissing the tearful abigail, with a remark that she could not afford such luxuries. With steady firm hand she had strangled the blackbird, poisoned the dog and cat; made up a bundle of such clothes as yet remained, remarking with a sad smile to awe-stricken Theo:

'This piece of linen is new and fine, and will make a winding-sheet.'

So strange and self-contained a woman was out of his experience. As they passed down Deadman's

Place, an opening was visible among the rickety groups of dwellings leading to a neglected square of unkempt grass.

'See how I know this neighbourhood,' she said quietly. 'Yonder's the "Crossbones," where the poor fallen women lie buried in sacks for want of coffins, and never a word said over them! Beyond is Hangman's Acre, an impassable morass laden with fever, stretching away as far as Kennington, its only denizens the malefactors swinging in their chains, keeping guard over the women's resting-place.'

There was something so uncanny about his companion talking thus in her loveliness and strength, that Theo was relieved when they reached the prison-gate. It would be necessary to stay for a day or two within the Clink, till sundry details were arranged. He explained to her that 'twould be quite possible to return to the stage and earn a living whilst dwelling in the Rules; but this proposal was met with a decided and stubborn negative. She would never return to the stage. Why, she declined to say. How make clear to such an one as Honest Pistol her Quixotic feminine resolve? How could he comprehend the proud sensitive woman's pain—her rebellious feeling of outrage over the conditions of her life?

To certain minds there is witchery in martyrdom. The fanatic savage who flings himself naked on a foe armed *cap-à-pie* must feel something of this. He

must know that in so unequal a struggle he must perforce be worsted, and fling upon his gods the responsibility of his defencelessness.

Thus was it with Barbara. She had received a full share of buffets; though shorn, the wind had not been tempered, and she resented the coldness of the blast. She was not to be fitly clothed? Very well, then. If she must die of cold she would cast off the flimsy garment which had been bestowed in order to freeze more quickly. Hence it will be discerned that the lash produced no good effect upon Barbara. The more her back was bruised the harder she set her teeth, the more steely was the glitter of her eye. When she passed under the gateway of the Clink, none so obstinate as she, so upright of bearing and stiff-necked, none more superbly disdainful.

Twenty guineas in a silken purse comprised the sum-total of her fortune—a present from Theo, who indeed could but ill afford it. Yet by her queenly air did she instil respect into the circling crowd as she stood in the prison-yard.

The 'lovely Peggy,' a battered female with no nose and but one blear eye—terror of new-comers—sank back abashed, and feebly mumbled for 'garnish.' Three dirty men in fetters paused in a game to doff their hats with an involuntary courtesy, which was shared even by the head turnkey, omnipotent tyrant.

What a tatterdemalion crew! Dirtier, more squalid, sure, than formerly. Haggard, slouching,

lanthorn-jawed; some dwindling from lack of food, some fevered by strong waters—ragged, unwashed, eaten by horrible maladies; some numbed by blank despair, some jovial with hellish levity.

You could tell at a glance which were the ruffling bullies, which their persecuted victims—which were the new-comers who hoped still, which the ones (preponderating company) from whom all hope had faded.

The entrance of the beauteous apparition and her squinting escort produced but a momentary lull, and then the hurlyburly rose again with renewed din, and such oaths and talk as turned our Barbara the paler. Unmasked disease, leering vice, unblushing crime, rags, dirt, stench.

'Twas with sulky consideration that the turnkey nodded when Barbara cried out, with an imperious wave of a fan, 'With these wretches I will not lodge,' and led the way into an inner yard.

The Palace of Sin was a vast edifice, or rather series of edifices; for the original Clink, bounded by Clink Street, the timber-yards, and Plague burial-grounds, had burst its bonds and invaded Winchester House, erst the Bishop's mansion.

It contained at this time upwards of two hundred rooms, the best of which were let at various prices from two shillings to a guinea a week, the rest at a shilling (clear advantage this over the ways of the spunging-houses).

When the establishment was full, which was not unfrequently the case, poor prisoners let their rooms to such as chose to pay, herding together on the benches of the taproom or sleeping three in a bed, to eke out a frugal income. There were two taprooms, suitable to the wants of two classes, high and low; three coffee-rooms; one wine-room, for the fastidious and select.

In each chamber was a barrack bed, but no bedding was provided. Neither in winter was there any firing, except for those who bought it. Prison allowance was a twopenny loaf per day, and water gratis. Humane butchers, however, often sent presents of meat for the poor prisoners, and each took his turn to shake a box at the entrance, and beg the passengers for groats. But in this respect the Clink was not so favoured as its neighbours on the open Borough, for 'twas off the common thoroughfare, with its pitying crowds; and those who squatted at its feet were mostly thieves and beggars.

Between the prison and the Thames a host of crazy stairs in short flights led from the river-ooze into shambling tenements of the lowest kind, whence issued often enough at midnight cries of woe and murder, followed before dawn, perchance, by a telltale splash and a body floating seaward.

Owing to the site of their eyrie, the female inhabitants of this nest were known as 'Winchester birds'—uncomely fowls, whose croaking was as

unseemly as their habits; a flock over whose iniquities Colonel de Veil shook his pate and sighed; but that worthy keeper of order knew better than to molest them, seeing that in Southwark his authority was nil, resting content to bid all watermen to warn their fares, lest haply they should be undone by flirting with riverside Delilahs.

Pestilence, crime, sanctuary. In three words, such was the history, such the attributes, of this nook 'twixt the Borough and the Silent Highway. Lawlessness reigned inside and out of the Clink and its vicinity, as well as in Long Southwark and the Mint. Even within the prison the sexes mingled unshackled, as suited the fancy of the moment.

There was a strong-room on the ground-floor for the reception of night charges; a series of stone cells for felons, pending the last short trip on a hurdle to Margaret's Hill or St. Thomas-a-Watering. Hence there was a constant simmer of quarrelling by day and night, scratching of faces, showering of broken glass, unceasing roar of strife.

But there were other amusements besides: penny theatres, lighted by a glimmer of dips, where the players were the worst of vagabonds, the audience ruffians in hiding.

For the moment we have no more to do with such aristocratic or cosy gaieties as those of the Dog and Duck or Cooper's Gardens. Turn we our gaze to the Clink neighbourhood alone, for there in Mon-

tagu Close, under shadow of the prison walls, Barbara Philpot elected to reside until the Pilgrim should set her free.

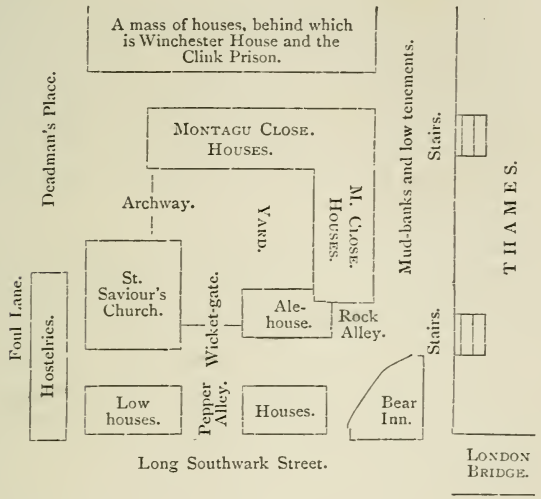
Although London hath for hundreds of years occupied a unique position as the home of mysteries and wonders, I doubt if in any secluded corner, even of Southwark itself, there lurks anything so wonderful, at this period in which I write, as Montagu Close.

In the first place—owing, some say, to a misdirected letter having fallen there into the hands of my Lord Monteagle, whereby the hellish plot of Guido Fawkes was brought to light and frustrated—it possessed privileges transcending even those of St. George's or the Mint. 'Twas a sanctuary for the red-handed as well as debtors, and possessed one obvious advantage over the other sanctuary for murderers hard by—St. George's Church, next to Whytelion-Bridewell and King's Bench—in that sometimes even the Southwarkers revolted against some particular crime, when—obedient to Judge Lynch—they formed a cordon round the sacred edifice, waited till the wretch was starved out, then fell upon and hanged him.

So malignant an accident could not well befall the refugee in Montagu Close, for a network of narrow alleys led those who knew the ground in all directions, affording endless facilities of escape; while against common myrmidons of the law, should any such be foolhardy enough to venture there, was a fine array

of posts and chains and shibboleths and watchwords, which would render abortive the snares of the most ingenious.

This close was shaped like a capital L, thus:



and consisted of two rows, at right-angles, of two-storied wooden tenements, standing in the mud with their backs to the Thames.

One entrance was under a low stone arch (originally a part of St. Mary's Priory) with a planked loft above, over which was visible the square grey tower of St. Saviour's. The other was through a little postern at corner of Pepper Alley, by London Bridge, which postern was commanded by a humble tavern.

At 11 p.m. the gates of this Holy of Holies among privileged Alsatias were closed, and therefore snug, but not for that reason quiet. Broils, fights, and drunken shrieks and yells kept the spirits of all alert and cheerful. The tiny houses were accessible by means of tiny doors like those of almshouses, with tumbledown galleries above from which (over the offal, house-refuse, festering cabbage-stalks; pigs, chickens, sitting in puddles) there stretched such a network of fluttering linen spread on cords as served in lieu of awning.

Through the postern persons could pass at any hour of the night on payment of a halfpenny, and careful surveillance from a window of the tavern; not that enemies to peace would be so ill-advised as to attempt an escalade. And so lodgings in Montagu Close were somewhat dear, in view of their singular advantages.

What a multitude of diverse particles might be dissected by a skilful hand out of the nightly hubbub! There was a nest of foreign dyers—queer oasis of honest folk—who worked with guttural cries; divers yards where broom-men chopped their stock of heath and osier.

There was a poor-house (as if the whole neighbourhood were not a poor-house!) where poverty-stricken creatures dragged shrunken shanks to die.

On the river-edge stood the great public bake-houses, where salamanders were busy till daylight

paled the redness of the furnace-glow, turning out steaming bread in cataracts, the which were viewed with hungry eyes and whining bleatings by empty wretches who had crept there in search of warmth. Certain private bakeries had sacrilegiously wormed a place for themselves within the sacred edifice among the venerable monuments. Pigs and horses were housed in the Lady Chapel, whence they contributed a quota to the din by spectral neighs and unearthly grunts and squeals.

Here was it, in Montagu Close, that, in the fourth house, with a window looking out across the shattered gallery towards Pepper Alley and the Bridge, Mrs. Barbara Philpot set up her few penates to await the summons of the Pilgrim.

Theo, who suffered, perhaps, from a suspicion that his wife had had a hand in the evil, remonstrated in vain. On the ground-floor, at least, the rooms were better furnished, if a trifle more expensive.

'Why mince matters?' she asked, with a new asperity. 'If I begin on the ground-floor I shall move upward till I reach the garret. We must accept the concomitants of poverty. I vow 'tis a charming house—convenient, too—for is not Glory Kilburne, the Clink scavenger, my landlord, whose duty it will be when my time comes to cart me to the Crossbones in a sack?'

From this position the obdurate damsel refused to budge, vowing she liked the outlook, for from the

elevation of the gallery she could catch a glimpse of the golden Tower-vanes glinting in the sun, beyond the dark broken outline of the street on London Bridge; while down Rock Alley by Cock-stairs she could see the Winchester birds taking an outing on the Silent Highway, when they could catch a gullible apprentice; mark the lozenge window-panes of the modish Bear, hard by the waterworks and rapids, in whose balconies she had dined with Walpole, with hosts of attendant butterflies in those dream-days that had departed. But then—ah me!—by turning her head a little she could detect the forbidding shape of the cage and pillory upon Southwark Rise, by the corner of Foul Lane and the Green Dragon.

The pillory somehow always made her shudder, despite her stony mask; for, in sooth, if the mob chanced to be vicious the pillory was a fearful punishment—to wit, in the case of Egan the thief-taker, who perished under the ordeal. In the night, too, some times she would awake and shiver, which vexed her pride, for she ought by this time to have got the better of such tremors. 'Twas when St. George's bell began to toll in the small hours; for she knew 'twas the signal for the waking of the miserable culprits who were to enter on the last sleep after a visit to St. Thomas-a-Watering.

Then would she, turning, wakeful, on her hard pallet, argue against such folly. Why shudder for

those whose fate was kinder than her own? What a solitude was this in the midst of constant noise! What long-drawn hideous suffering! How long was it to last? Two phantoms stalked before her eyes and beckoned—Hunger and Madness. Which would outstrip the other?

To what a strait is a human sufferer brought who comes to look on madness as a benefit! Like other fashionable ladies, she had walked the corridors of Bedlam over on Moorfields across the river; had gazed at the straw-crowned kings and moping potentates, chained naked to the wall. To think that she should come to look on them with envy! Yes, envy instead of pity; for all her pity now was centred in herself.

From her place by the open window overlooking the squalid Close, she could not but hear the sentiments of those who wrangled below, and hearing perforce was tainted.

There was much truth in what they said. The laws were so uncompromising, so hard upon the weak, that they frustrated their intent. 'Twas absurd that any should fear Death, since he was so familiar a figure, always standing at the door. Why, to cut a hop-bind in a hop-garden was a capital offence! If people flouted the gibbet with its heavy daily crop, 'twas the lawgivers who taught them to do so.

Musing on these things, Bab caught herself wish-

ing that Walpole, the lawgiver, could see for a while with her eyes, learn from her experience; framed conversations and arguments, guessed what he would reply, smiled at the fancied sallies of his *bonhomie;* then roused herself to a sense of her surroundings with such a twang of pain as almost bade her hope it was the Pilgrim's finger-mark. For these fancied communings were bridges 'twixt Past and Present that 'twas exquisite agony to tread.

Then, alone, she would unmask. What throes of tearless anguish—arid, scorching, dry! What a tightening of nerves to snapping-point! Oh, the Past! Why could it not be walled away? Was this regret? Was she sorry for what she had done? Should she, bowing her stiff neck at last, and sinking in penitence on the bare boards, beg pardon—pray for tears to wash away this pent-up suffocating gall?

No, no! Out on the thought! She was not sorry. She was glad. She watched with avidity in the glass how her cheek grew thinner day by day, more wan and sunken, with a hectic spot—her eye more unnaturally bright. She was growing familiar with gnawing famine.

It would soon be over. Even if she desired to knit up the strands again, it was too late. What a comfort! Too late. The most ominous and mournful sentence of two words in the British tongue came in guise of consolation.

Yes; it was too late. The struggle was nearly done. To whom apply, even if she wished? To Lord Belvedere, who had written an abusive letter, cutting off further intercourse? To Walpole? Had not Crump, his confidential secretary, distinctly told her on the very last occasion of their meeting that he, Crump, had interceded in vain, for Walpole had vowed he was disgusted with her? Till the crucial point of money supervenes, we never know people. 'Twas strange though, for Sir Robert was the soul of good-nature, was rich, and very far from strait-laced. Ah! but he owed his liberty, if not his life, to her, and gratitude is a buttoner of hearts. Was Wilks in Ireland still, or was he, too, disgusted? To think that Hastang, Byron, and Theo, a trinity of reprobates, who professed no virtue, should have been the only ones to display godlike mercy! What a dismal but terribly true satire on human nature is that legend of the Good Samaritan!

The contemplation of it so titillated Bab's cynical mood, that she laughed an eldritch laugh—as discordant and harsh as a devil's cachinnation when he hath just clinched a bargain for a soul. To Byron 'twould never do again to apply for help; Theo had done far more than could have been expected; Hastang was defunct. Her place was to follow the last with such speed as might be. The deduction was logical—as clear as day. And yet when that Past would insist upon obtruding its unwelcome

shadow, the paroxysms were terrible—as hard unflinchingly to bear as throes of hunger. What a mercy that no human eye should look on them!

'Twas obvious to the dwellers in the Close that the tall majestic woman with the colourless face and tangled masses of uncombed black hair was fading slowly. She rarely went forth, but sat gazing Towerwards, with hands listless and transparent upon her tattered lap, as in a trance. At first they dubbed her overbearing, for her ways were rude; and when her expression changed from one of hard indifference, it was to sharp disdain. Yet was there a distinction in her manner—a dignity of pain, borne without murmuring—that carried its weight. She chose to be left alone. 'Twas the wise rule in Montagu Close that no one should meddle in other's business. That she was no better off in this world's goods than they was patent. If she chose to batten on pride, who should gainsay the fancy? It was apparently not nourishing.

Glory Kilburne was a rough fellow, as it behoved the man to be who was the Clink's scavenger. What with the sties and well-stirred ditches, and the overfull churchyard, which was for ever discharging its contents into the cellars of the surrounding hostelries, Glory Kilburne had little time for the cultivation of polished graces.

The lady had seen better days, and sadly wasted her opportunities. When she came to live with

him, she was so beautiful that he would coin blundering excuses to stump up to her room and look at her. But one of her endowments was a fiendish temper. She would brook no prying, and could be very ribald without using oaths or expletives; and, by occult means, could crumple up simple Glory, and toss him down the ladder-stair, despite his muscular development.

There could be no doubt of it that the woman was starving—absolutely starving—flinging voluntarily away her beauty and her youth. What a misguided soul! There was not a Winchester bird who was worthy to buckle her shoe—and she was starving, and owed him rent!

In his murky brain was stored the theory that advantages were intended for use: that life, if short, should be as merry as possible. Was it not outrageous, then, to starve and owe him rent, with the Crossbones her inevitable resting-place, like the rest? She was morbid, and required a fillip.

With the best intentions, never meaning to carry out the threat, he stumped up the ladder-stair one morning, and announced that she must pay her rent somehow, or go within a week. She nodded, and said nothing; but there was something in her eyes that made Glory vaguely sorry.

'Twas bad to have to spur a beautiful proud woman of refined manners who looked so plaguy ill. Perhaps he was wrong to tease her; and yet, with

his small pittance for much hard and unsavoury labour, could he be expected to forego his rent? Had he been able to look on his lodger after his departure, he would have been alarmed, and have despatched to her aid some person of her own sex. The harrow had passed so sharply over the ladies of the Close, that, save when drunk or angry, they were pitiful for trouble. Crouching down in her rags, frayed relics of departed splendour, against the cracked and time-stained wall, she slowly laid her heavy head upon the shelf that served for table in unutterable helplessness, while, with the mere effort of movement, her skin grew moist and clammy.

'The Lady's Last Stake'! oh, Mr. Hogarth—not in a damask fauteuil in a well-furnished chamber, with precious clocks, and screens, and knickknacks—but in the garret, which contains — no scrap of food— nothing but a single rush-chair, a soiled bundle in lieu of pillow, and a coarse pallet—the view without pigs, chickens, cabbage-stalks—the frowning prison-wall within a stone's-throw. Such are the accessories for such a picture. Beautiful, hopeless, deserted Barbara! How fair a jewel in how foul a setting! What shall we say of those whose artifices have brought thee down?

'The Lady's Last Stake'! Bab's dimmed eyes, seeking her favourite Tower-vanes, had caught the shimmer of the turbid stream. The rhythm of the roaring rapids soothed her ear; and she made up

her mind. It was decided now. She had been a fool, and blind. Endure, forsooth! Why endure? The ordeal was too slow—too slow! Her bodily strength was waning fast, and with it strength of purpose. Weakened by want, to what might she be driven? Oh, God—to what? There was still a wide span 'twixt this and the end for which she longed. A moment would come when, still suffering, she would be too feeble to hold her own. 'In a week,' the man said. A week—a century to one who suffered so—and yet, how near that open grave, with its sweet smell of fresh-turned earth! The man gave her a week! She wished him no harm, for he was very poor; and who should know better than she the pinch of poverty? There was naught to be gained by repining. Would the Pilgrim come within a week, he who is so dull of hearing, and so slow of foot—capricious wayward ghost-moth—when sorrow claims release? Why endure throughout the week, knowing that when 'twas done even this humble squalid roof might shelter her no more? What then — the Clink — the dreaded 'common side,' with its rampant pestilence, and unmasked crime, and bare-faced wickedness—the lowest depth in the inner yard, with its sinister nickname 'Hell,' where those were locked who had no money left, or prospect of having any?

Since she had dwelt within the Rules Barbara had become aware, perforce, of the enormities that

flourished in the prison; and with a thrill of horror considered the fate of a beautiful woman, cast sick, and weak, and dying as into a den of wolves—worse, far worse—of human beasts of prey degraded from the godly semblance.

Comfort! The genuine comfort lay in that tiny strip of silver shimmer which glittered coaxingly —in the roaring lullaby. While she was strong enough—ere she was too weak to crawl to its saving rim—the river!

From the moment when Glory's blundering step ceased to reverberate, until the silver strip had turned to gold, Bab remained crouched, her head, with its sable coronal, reposing upon the shelf, while whirling visions, fraught with pain, danced on the darkening wall. Her brain was so crystal-clear that she could see into her own being as well as beyond the veil. How foolish to have endured so much, fighting against the inevitable, since this must be the end! Ought she not to have seen it long ago, and have cut this knot instead of bearing? By morning where would she be? Caught on some reedy bank with wondering rustics in a circle, musing on the mystery of her young life's thread untimely severed!

At any rate, 'twould not be her lot to sleep with the Winchester birds. The Crossbones would not hold her. The rustics would pity, judging she must have suffered much ere forced to this, and lay her gently in some tranquil village churchyard.

Yet, no. In death, as in life, 'twas her doom to be an outcast, since no holy earth may clasp the suicide. What mattered that—Crossbones and a sack, or a pauper's nameless shell? Now that the die was cast she hungered and yearned for extinction, marvelling at the slowness of the hours. What a laggard was the idling sun! At last, impatient to be gone, Barbara stole forth before it was quite dark, and, lest the women who stood gossiping in the doorways should detect her purpose, chose the low archway by St. Saviour's, and wandered aimlessly to kill the lingering minutes up Deadman's Place, through Thieves' Lane, past the Crossbones, with its rank square of herbage (strange that she should be led to that spot at such a time), into new ground.

'If I wander in this direction I shall lose myself,' she thought. 'It might be well to go straight on towards yonder row of gibbets upon Lambeth Marsh, on the chance of meeting one of the roving bands of desperadoes who infest St. George's Fields. Finding the wanderer penniless, they might be induced to slay her and solve a difficulty. And yet it might not be risked. 'Tis those who cling to life who are found murdered. To pass such another day as was now just gone would be impossible. Courage.'

Turning about, Bab quickly retraced her steps, and threading Foul Lane, emerged into Long Southwark. Dreading to meet some acquaintance

upon so open a thoroughfare, she then plunged hastily down Bear Alley. These were the steps—the nearest to the Bridge — at which, in silken bravery, she had been wont to land ; close overhead the jutting balconies and gables of the favourite inn. Oh, the Past ! The haunting mocking Past !

Swiftly she descended the steps, clinging to the side-rail, for they were slippery with ooze. The tide was very low ; judging by the moisture, it rose at the flood to the sixth step. 'Twould serve with patience. Creeping under the shadow she sat on the lowest step, and waited for the rising water. Her tattered dress was too dingy to court notice. Removing her apron, she folded it slowly and placed it by her side, and, with chin supported on her wasted palms, sank into reverie. The water lapped about her feet, loth, as it seemed, to rise and destroy so fair a thing. How still it was ! Now and again a plash, at intervals a shooting wherry, causing the quick flow to dance in glimmering sheen ere it swept on steadily. This evening there was little traffic. That was well. Even the Bear was unusually quiet.

'' 'Tis the off-season,' she reflected.

'Twas so long since she had dwelt in the bustle, that the passing of seasons was no more to her than to Selkirk upon his island.

For the last time. How familiar was the livid landscape which lay bathed in the moonbeams beyond the low crescent of the arch ! The Tower,

its four golden vanes paled to greenish-silver, rising above a huddled group of tenements on crutches; picturesque Wapping and Rotherhithe looming through a fretwork of slender masts and cordage; a murky channel where the Fleet ditch vomited forth its foulness. Black Mary's Hole, up a lane where dwelt Du Val—inaccessible except at ebb—a den of bad repute. Then, further away, Execution Dock, with its row of dangling pirates against the sky. Crime and shameful Death—their track was everywhere, brand bequeathed by Cain.

Bab quailed, and glanced down fearfully. The water was lapping round her knees, and very cold. The roar of the huge revolving wooden wheels was deafening. How they creaked and dripped and laboured, white with foam under the shadow! What if they were to catch and whirl her round and round and crush her limbs?

So much the better; the mass that would float out to sea would be a shapeless one, without form as well as nameless. Would *he* ever ponder on her fate, marvel what had befallen the meteor?

'Gervas!' She repeated his name softly, then with bitterness. Was he not happy with his chosen Pamela? Was he happy? Was it possible with such as she? He would never know—never, never know that for love of him a loyal heart was broken. 'The Lady's Last Stake'! She hugged herself to think she'd chosen worthily, for his sake. If in another

sphere they were to meet, pure she could look into his face. A sacrifice she might be, but would die unsullied. Die! It was not dread of death, but the coldness of the water that caused the girl to shiver. A bath in oblivion—a dip into a magic stream, where on one side plunges sorrow, on the other emerges infancy. A joyous transfiguration. What are the dead but faded foliage that hath swirled down from the Tree of Life? By-and-by 'twill bud, and have its leaves again—fresh, soft and green, for the birth and death of men resemble the leaves eternally. To drown with the fresh salt ocean for a sepulchre, sure that is an enviable fate; for doth not modest Death hasten to obliterate that he hath overthrown? The preserving of corpses is an outrage, for it raiseth phantoms and nightmares. Death is exhaled by dissolution. How well hath some one said that the soul is the music, the body but the instrument. The former exists, though the latter may be broken; and yet, without its medium cannot make its presence known.

In the beginning was darkness, stillness, and the night; sure we return to nothingness? The singing, fleeting water! Who doth not love the water? Since 'tis the basis of all the necessaries of existence whereby we live, it must be worshipped or abhorred, according to our earthly state. Is not the ocean the great grave, brawling sometimes through its mighty jaws, sometimes humming lullaby—symbol of death and peace?

Heigh-ho! The hovering souls, when they have passed, where do they linger? The Talmud saith that only such shall be immortal as accept the doctrine of immortality. How many are there who in their bitterness would rather choose annihilation?

Burying her face in her hands, Bab groaned aloud. What did she believe? Was this cruel ordeal, so impossible to bear that she must needs fly from it, but the threshold of worse trials? Was there indeed no rest?

The water lapped and lapped, clasping its victim tight in chill embrace, sucking, gurgling thirstily.

'I come! I come!' Bab faltered, quivering in every limb. 'No coward; yet, how hard; how hard, my God, to die!'

The millwheels were mocking with their roar. Her apron, like a face-cloth for the dead, floated away upon the tide. Under the oily surface elfin faces gibbered and grimaced, jutting forth the tongue. She was standing a-tiptoe on the veriest verge. Youth, enfeebled though she was, wrestled for empire with Death.

'Young and beautiful, why die?' whispered a taunting voice, somewhere in the river-bed.

'Out—out on ye! It is too late!'

Not knowing what she did, Barbara, in her frenzy, sent forth a piercing shriek that rent the air and reverberated along the banks, then cowered with chattering teeth.

A window opened above in Nonsuch House, and the watchman peered into obscurity.

From whence had come that cry of anguish? Some capsized wherryman. A black line of rope descended to the water and drifted with the tide. No sign of a boat. He was mistaken. Drawing up the cord, the watchman banged to the jingling casement and was gone.

Quick, quick now, for there must be but One witness to the tragedy.

With trembling fingers Barbara had clasped her throbbing throat and covered her mouth. What—a coward after all? Had she not freely made her choice? Again she stood erect and raised her emaciated arms—one motion and 'twould be irrevocable. The paroxysm was over; she was strong again.

Stay—what was that above the din of water-wheels? A refrain that was familiar wafted on the breeze, echo of a happier day. She stood transfixed, irresolute. The song grew louder; a young man passed under Traitor's Gate, glanced at the row of heads, then leaned on both elbows and looked over the parapet.

'Stop the meteor in its flight,
Or the orient rays of light;
'Tis as vain, below, above,
To impede the course of love!'

He sang and ceased, for he detected her figure on the steps.

'Forbear!' he cried, with a theatric wave; 'the Everlasting hath fixed His canon 'gainst self-slaughter!'

Guessing the woman's motive, the intruder pattered breathless through the gate. There was yet time—the tall figure willowed riverward, but, agile as a fawn, the youth dashed forward and caught her by the skirt.

'However woeful,' he panted, 'more terrible than life's the face of angry God!'

'Oh, let me be! oh, let me be!' she wailed.

The twain were swaying out of shadow into light, while Barbara strove with teeth and nails to free herself. At the same moment each recognised the other.

Sir Charles dropped upon his knees, and covered Bab's hands with kisses.

CHAPTER II.

'PARTNERSHIP.'

THE joy of crazy Charlotte was dizzying at first. Hers were the loving gambols of a dog that had found a long-lost master. Why the beautiful, queenly Barbara should be in rags, and in the act of suicide, concerned her not at present. Sufficient was it that the lost was found; for 'twill be remembered that Mrs. Charke leaned once against the railings of Golden Square, and, terrified by the bedevilment within, and the troop in gilded liveries, shrank away abashed. But here was her dear benefactress in the flesh pressed in her arms, enduring her caresses.

To Barbara these kisses, these cooing words of affection, were passing strange and confusing. She was not alone, was not unloved. Her condition of mind underwent revulsion. Ideas had tumbled into chaos, and refused for awhile to be settled into order. All she was sure of was that she was not to die;

so, clinging to Sir Charles—whose clothes, indeed, were little better than her own—the pair moved hand-in-hand together to the Close.

At the entrance they met Glory Kilburne, who vouchsafed an approving wink. Who could this boy be in shabby-genteel attire? As frail, and gaunt, and hollow-cheeked as his companion. Not a lover; a brother, possibly. His shoes were down at heel, his stockings full of holes. The silver tinsel on his hat was weather-stained and tarnished.

'Well, well,' grunted the landlord. 'Let the rent go hang! She, poor lonely soul, hath found a friend, and I am glad on 't.'

Bab sat on the only chair absorbed in wonder at the strange thing that had befallen, and Charlotte crouched at her feet and clasped her waist, babbling like a jocund brook. The moon served in lieu of candle, and when the sun looked in again, wondering as much as Bab, Charlotte perceived the pitiful plight of Mrs. Philpot, and was grievously distressed.

The room was hung with penury. Famine—how well she knew the look of it!—stared from her friend's face. She broke into such a torrent of stormy sobs, that Barbara perforce was withdrawn from her own puzzled musings to soothe the crazy creature as of yore.

'Poor heart! poor heart!' cried Charlotte; 'that you should come to this! For me it matters not, for trouble hath often been my bedfellow; but

you—— It is my fault—'tis I who am to blame—woe's me! Am I not banned? all who are good to me must come to shipwreck.'

The old delusion.

'Not so, dear Charlotte,' Barbara murmured. 'I was near a great wickedness through loneliness and want. 'Tis you who plucked me back. You've saved me twice. See! you bring a blessing, not a curse. Your presence gives me the courage that I lacked. Our positions are reversed—is it not whimsical? You are the protector now. On your shoulders—you great, strong man—I'll lean my weakness.'

Charlotte looked up with a new hope, and dried her tears.

This would be fine. She laughed and clapped her hands like a crowing infant. Sir Charles should be a Paladin and protect Barbara. A man's mission; and was she not a man? Nay! Sir Charles was not so feckless but he could earn a wage; was handy; could turn to anything, from Captain Plume at the theatre to chaffering fish or sausages.

Her wandering intellect turned on a new tack. Charlotte uprose, and paced the floor with a swagger of vast importance. Sir Charles had money in his purse—see the opiate! Nine silver shillings earned this very night. He would run out and purchase food for Barbara.

No sooner said than done. In sooth, he was

nimble as well as handy. How could it be otherwise, he laughed with glee? He had adopted a new profession. Dear Bab might guess in vain for ever. No—not the stage. Would Barbara shrink from a lackey?

While Mrs. Philpot devoured the food with a wolfish greediness that told its fearful tale, Charlotte chattered of herself. She was a waiter now at Cupar's Gardens, half a mile away. The queerest turn of fortune!

'Madam Dorr, the proprietress,' she said, 'liked my appearance as that of a decayed gentleman, and admonished me to seek a less robust employment, for her patrons in their cups pay little heed to manners. To her surprise she found me quick and willing, and superior to other serving-men, and was pleased to admit me to her table. On Sundays Cupar's is crowded, and I trembled lest some among the company should recognise my face; but happily not one among 'em knew me, for they are chiefly French tailors and German peruke-makers. When I spoke to them in French Madam Dorr was like to have a fit and eat me up with gratitude, for she and her company were wont to converse by signs; and ever since she hath treated me more as a son than as a servant. 'Tis time to be off,' she concluded briskly. 'We will live together? Then am I indeed joyous! But mind, no more vagaries by riverside!' and, with a hearty kiss, the whim-bitten sister of

Theophilus ran off to labour, carolling her merry song.

Left alone, Barbara found it difficult to realize this change, and what it would mean for her. How oft had she railed at the vamped-up, threadbare hearts it was her lot to contemplate, and sigh for one with whom to commune that was spick and span, fresh from the hands of Nature.

Charlotte's mind was out of gear—twisted awry by a husband's wickedness and a father's cruelty. Colley had charged her with ingratitude, whereas she was morbidly sensitive to kindness. How often had the harmless kitten gone frisking forth, to return draggled, wobegone, rumpled! She was unstable and ballastless, subject to delusions. Her lamp of Hope, when to outward seeming all but blown out, could lambently flame again. There was a meekness and gentleness about the stricken creature that carried its own lesson.

Bab, blind with overwhelming pride, had pretended to protect her! The recluse, solitary in her chamber, reflected upon these things. They were a pair of wastrels—which of the two was feeblest? What was the end to be? Not the tragical and summary conclusion she had herself foreshadowed—that was a wandering beacon that had led her into the quagmire.

Long ago it had seemed good that the two should unite, and, behold, 'twas come to pass! Were they to struggle on for years with no object but to main-

tain an existence, which to one at least was hateful? Things ofttimes—nay, generally—turn out so differently to what we suppose or wish, that there is nothing for it but to fold our hands and sit awaiting the *dénouement*.

Each day did Charlotte perform her allotted service, and bring home her wage—steadied for awhile, as her way was, by the weight of a new responsibility. Sometimes she had tales to tell of escapes from the evil lurkers who patrolled the lonely roads. Not that she feared them; for once, in her adventurous life of strolling or at Bartlemy, she had met a man who took a fancy to her, and who turned out to be Burnworth, the too notorious collector. She had permission to use his name, which was a shibboleth of strength throughout the widespread fraternity. He had even gone so far in his liking for the apparent youth as to give him an address at an owl's-roost, adjacent to the Tower, lest haply he should come to need a refuge.

'There's no knowing,' he had said; 'but I promise that you'll find our set more kind, if rough, than the laced and powdered folk.'

Thus Charlotte earned a living for the twain, while Barbara mused and moped. The fragile tentacles of her being were seared and shrunk. Perhaps in time she might return to something like herself. Meanwhile, she, whilom so independent, clung to Charlotte, with a vague new uneasiness,

and accepted her benefits, moving as one in a dream —a sleep-walker who performs mechanical acts, yet knows not what she doth.

During Sir Charles's absences she was awake, yet sleeping; when he returned, a gleam shone out of her eyes, and she nestled up to the youth, laying her head, with its queenly coronal of thick glossy coils (carefully tended now), on his patched silken sleeve; the which perceiving, Glory Kilburne said to his cronies, over pot and pipe—grunting good-humouredly, for he was paid his money:

'A young man of quality, I warrant, under a cloud. I knew she was a lady. May brother and sister both see better days again; for indeed they are gentle, if reserved—bred in a superior school, of which we know little here.'

Talking to Charlotte was in some sort like talking to herself; and to her she spoke out her mind on many subjects, while, for economy, they spent their evenings in the dark. As you might tell your troubles to a hound, and feel the sympathy of his wagging tail and soft loving eyes, she opened her heart to Charlotte as she never could have done to another living soul. She told of how sickening had become—to one who, under a thin veneer, was true and earnest—the hollow unreality of the stage; of how she had come to understand that the spring which moves the dramatic profession is vanity, which, growing by what it feeds on, becomes all-

absorbing; that, were vanity to be done away by magic, there could be no actors or actresses; that, by being constantly fed, and pampered, and flattered, it pervades and monopolizes the soul; that like the lean kine in the fable, it swallows everything else, and yet is mean and thin.

'This is why,' explained the ex-Diva, 'I have taken a horror of the stage; for on it are to be found gathered the most contemptible passions. Vanity, my dear, is father of Envy, who is parent of a progeny of vices.'

'There have been great geniuses upon the stage,' timidly hazarded Sir Charles.

'Genius, wherever placed,' retorted Bab, 'turns what it touches into gold. True genius is a scarce commodity. I don't count the few privileged ones; only the impertinent, empty-pated, stupid, ignorant, painted public favourites, of whom there are too many; whose airs of superiority and culture are based on no foundation, and yet whom 'tis the fashion to applaud as gifted, Heaven-inspired creatures. I tell thee, Charlotte, that to watch their strutting self-importance is sickening. They are bladders full of wind that one's fingers itch to prick.'

'But these actors and actresses whom you condemn are your friends,' suggested Charlotte, disconcerted; for was she not member of a theatric family, whose Penates were Thalia and Melpomene?

'I try not to see the imperfections of my friends,'

Barbara replied; 'and, of course, there is no rule without exceptions. I was one of them once, and no exception. I'm not vain now, nor like to be, God wot! But to swear that I never shall again would be a promise that, like a mirror planned too large, might break itself in making.'

Charlotte looked so shocked, that Bab rapped out a laugh that weirdly reflected her departed self. The daughter of King Coll, poet laureate and ex-patentee of Drury, actor and successful dramatist, could not hear such heresy without a tremor. Charlotte had been herself a player all her life, acting on many a humble stage of booth and barrack; but she, poor thing, was one of the exceptions to Mrs. Philpot's rule. Necessity had been her task-master. She had laboured not so much for fame as for a crust to keep body and soul together; the which, since the harsh dictum promulgated by the angel in Eden, ennobles any profession.

'I will go farther,' Bab continued, roused for a moment from apathy, 'and declare my conviction, born of personal experience, that the practice of the theatric calling tends to degrade the character; for 'tis founded on the pettiest foibles. His or hers must be an unusually tough nature that can resist the debasing impulse. Deny if you can that pampered vanity begets mean grovelling malice. Go behind any scene, from the stage of majestic Drury to that of the lowest penny show in Southwark Fair. Will

you find aught there but rampant envy, malice, vanity, brazen assurance? Yes. You will find charity, which covereth many sins; but 'tis only money charity, which is more than counteracted by the uncharitable attributes of envy and malice aforesaid. With all stage people money is dross; for 'tis easy come and easy go with the unthrifty folk. If they would be less lavish of their gold, and put a bridle on their mean and petty vices, their hearts and tongues, they'd have a better chance of Heaven. It makes my blood boil, I vow; for 'tis the fashion to say that the theatre is lowering to public taste. The stage, to my mind, is injurious to the players, rather than to the audience.'

Her tongue unloosed, the confidences of the bruised recluse became by degrees complete. Her talk was like a monologue spoken to her shadow. Thus she even came to divulge the secret which had warped her career. Her disappointment in her mother—in her father; then the culminating blow whereby she realized that he who to her was the one man of men, throwing her aside, could turn away, and stoop to a woman who was utterly unworthy.

For Barbara's sake, Charlotte became vastly interested in Gervas, admiring his qualities if angry at his blindness. She knew him by sight—had met him in old days—and one evening announced that, plodding home, she had seen the windows of the Bear illumined; my Lord Forfar, Pamela, and

other modish persons enjoying their dishes of tea upon the balcony. They were very merry, she narrated; indeed, the shrill cachinnation of the Honourable Pamela could be heard up Margaret's Hill. So near! And yet what a chasm 'twixt the fashionable Bear, not thirty yards off, and the sanctuary of Montagu Close! How wise it was in Bab never to stir abroad! Should Pamela glance down from the balcony some day on her sister's tattered robe, Mrs. Philpot would give up the ghost. Whence you will observe that the iron neck was still unbent, the haughty head unbowed. The sleep-walker—the automaton—suffered the Present; dared not look at the Past, still less towards the Future.

A moment arrived when there was a change in Charlotte's mood. The quick light step became heavy and faltering; and, flinging herself disconsolately on the floor, she gave vent to one of her periodical tornadoes of grief.

Bab waited quietly. Another blow must have fallen. There was more to be borne; what was it?

'Was ever wretched creature more unlucky?' Charlotte wailed. 'Misfortune is never tired of walking close behind.'

'Naught may go smooth with us for long,' Barbara acquiesced, with a calm that was not akin to resignation.

'A few days since,' Sir Charles explained, the paroxysm quelled, 'I was setting some Windsor

beans, when the maid came up to me, and hinted she had a secret to unfold—something to my advantage. "If you pay your addresses, you may marry your mistress," she said, "and none will say you nay. Think of a serving-man become lord of Cupar's Gardens! I, for one, would love you for a master." Marry my mistress! I laughed at the idea; for, indeed, she hath no quality to recommend her to anything beyond a porter or hackney-coachman. I hoped 'twas a forgery of the maid's; but a strangeness soon sprang up, and to-day I spake the truth to my mistress—but lo! she flew into a rage, and would not believe I was a woman. With a great outcry she turned me into the street; and now, dear friend, I am without a place. What shall we do for supper?'

Charlotte's accomplishments, as we know, were varied; but, unhappily, the same cause which brought so many to this dismal quarter rendered it convenient to her. The improvident creature was as usual deep in debt, dared not show her worn face on t'other side the river, not being a prisoner in enjoyment of the Rules; for the watchword of Burnworth might protect her against footpads, but not against the assaults of bumbailiffs. However, she was Barbara's providence, and it smote her affectionate heart to perceive the look of dismal endurance that settled on the visage of her friend, once so impetuous and volatile.

'Zoons!' she cried, with a ghastly phantom merriment; ''tis not the moment to be squeamish! Your ladyship is bitter on the theatric line, yet must we make shift to live by it. If the patent temples are closed to us, there are many slaughter-houses of dramatic poetry open. With trembling limbs and aching heart, I'll go the rounds by owl-light on t'other side of the water, and being universally studied, shall haply find a perch.'

'Twas a hazardous experiment, but under the pressing circumstances there was nothing else for it.

Armed with a pair of white stockings and a clean shirt, Sir Charles went forth across the bridge, and creeping in the shadow safely reached the Tennis Court. She was in luck to-night, for a party of amateurs were to perform the 'Recruiting Officer,' and Captain Plume had bolstered his courage till he lay snoring, speechless.

Here was Charlotte's chance, for the Captain was one of her pet parts, and resolving to risk the possible presence of any of the assailants of liberty, she announced to the would-be murderers of Farquhar that she was ready to go on. For the sake of Bab at home she haggled over terms which for herself alone she never would have dreamed of. Offered a crown, she stood out for a guinea more; but to prevent a demur on the company's part, she whispered to the manager that he might give the

twenty-one shillings privately, and publicly pay the five.

With what triumph did she fling the guinea upon the chair, and caper round the room! 'Twas ever so long since Bab had looked on gold, and a pale flush rose to her wan cheek. But such strokes of luck could only be expected rarely. The risks that Charlotte ran in her excursions were terrible. She was almost too small fry for the nets of the Marshal's officers, but every hole and corner betwixt the Tower and the Strand swarmed with a special class of desperate men, whose grim necessities drave them beyond respect for Burnworth's watchword.

The City after dark was particularly dangerous, for the best houses eastward stood back from the street, approached by porte-cochers, with shops on each side that were shut at dusk—thus offering a long bare frontage. Many at this time were closed altogether, owing to the general ruin that followed the South Sea Bubble. The myrmidons of Colonel de Veil were too few to cope with crime; the watchmen were old women. Hence each street and alley east of Temple Bar was haunted by a crew of ignorant bull-necked ruffians with empty bellies and no consciences, whose college had been the cockpit, the prize-ring, the boosing-ken—to whom no sprat was insignificant. Once or twice Charlotte was nearly caught, and came back trembling; and then her

courage waned, and cowering together hand-in-hand, she and her friend sat silent.

The number of destitute and unemployed persons at this time was appalling. In half-finished houses or those condemned as dangerous, the bodies of indigent wretches, who had sheltered there to die, putrefied the air. The living harboured with the dead—half-human animals, who 'twixt stings of want and loss of self-respect were callous to all human sentiment, and formed a Pariah caste. The vast districts spreading from Fleet Ditch along Holborn by Wheatstone Park (behind the palatial square of Lincoln's Inn); from St. Giles's, skirting Leicester Fields, to the sanctuary of Westminster; Houndsditch, Tower Hill, and Rosemary Lane; on t'other side the Mint, St. George's, Montagu Close—were all infested by a class of freebooters, from out of which rose small oases or islets, occupied by the honest and the opulent, encircled and separated by the ramifying arms of a sea of destitution and wickedness without parallel in other cities.

At this juncture it pleased those in authority to attempt to enforce the Gin Act, which, never popular, had speedily dropped into abeyance. A senseless report was spread that gin was the favourite tipple of Jacobites, whereas Hanoverians affected mug or beer houses.

Had this been really so, 'twould have been the interest of Government to let well alone; for the

gazettes teemed with accounts of sudden deaths in taverns from excessive gin-drinking.

The report was so outrageously mendacious, and the proceeding of Government so arbitrary, that all parties united in resistance of tyranny, mug-house men as well as others. Caricatures flew broadcast of 'The Death of Madam Geneva,' inviting all jolly souls to get gloriously drunk at her funeral.

Now the dangerous classes were always ready for riot, and dearly loved a chance of forgetting in drink their many trials. Processions of tatterdemalions scoured the streets, made bonfires, set alight to the better kind of dwellings. Leashes of oyster-wives ran amuck arm-in-arm; Irish chairmen armed themselves with chair-poles, and flourished them about like flails.

Truth to tell, since the passing of the Act against which Barbara had warned Sir Robert, gin had been sold as much as ever under fictitious names. 'Sangree,' 'Make Shift,' 'Cuckold's Delight,' 'Ladies' Waters,' 'Gripe-drink,' were to be purchased at any dram-shop, were vended by hawkers in the street under the noses of the robin-redbreasts.

An attempt to put down the illicit trade gave rise to a host of informers, who became the pest of the country. Some of these were foolish enough in their zeal to cross London Bridge; and then, as was to be supposed, they soon found cause to repent their temerity.

As we have had occasion to observe, the Southwark worthies preferred other tipple to gin; but the fact of its being forbidden was enough to increase the sale. The Mint, the Liberties of St. George, of Winchester House, arose in arms, and swept all before the muddy turbulence of their foul flood. They rushed under Traitor's Gate, helter-skelter over the Bridge, carried the fiery cross as far as the precincts of St. James's.

The soldiery were called out to push back the inundation, and bar it behind its limits. But the blood of the lawless being up, they took a little time to simmer down; and driven back on Southwark turned their cudgels on each other, quite in a friendly way, for the encouragement of surgeons.

That rioters should invade the Mall, occupy Charing Cross, make havoc in Leicester Fields, was a pestilent proceeding; but so long as they only made a hubbub in their own domain, 'twas an amusing spectacle.

Hence the Bear, the Bull, the Tabard, the Green Dragon did a roaring trade, for from these modish vantage-grounds splendid views of the fun might be obtained, much more diverting than Mr. Rich's machinery, or the mock heroics of Madam Pritchard.

This turmoil, as may be guessed, stood grievously in the way of Charlotte's money-grubbing, for the numerous gaffs were closed, both players and

audience finding occupation in the street. Sometimes she wist not which way to turn to earn a fee; and to add to her distress, a growing anxiety took possession of her mind anent the mental condition of her friend.

Despite the warped state of her own intellect, she could be smart enough in some things, and could not but be uneasy over the unnatural calm and sphinx-like air of Barbara. If Sir Charles announced ruefully that there would be no supper, Bab smiled a spectral smile as though the news were natural and not unwelcome. She followed fluttering, unstable Charlotte with her eyes about the garret, seemed pained out of her presence, emitted sighs of relief on her return after an absence. From this mental torpor she must be roused, or she would sink into imbecility. How to arouse her?

Timidly Madam Charke suggested that running in couples in their profession the pair should earn their crust; but at the suggestion those stern straight brows would contract painfully.

'I will never act again,' she would mutter; 'he would not like it.'

He! who? Was she still harping on that unfortunate love of hers? At thought of it, and of the man who could fling such a pearl away, Madam Charke waxed petulant. What futile constancy! What an insidious, odious, perverse monster was

this same god Cupid! How terribly true were Mr. Cowley's lines:

> 'Tis as vain, below, above,
> To impede the course of love!'

Cupid was never aweary of bringing together the wrong people. Charlotte herself had loved that rascal Charke with all her simple soul, and all he had given in exchange were beatings—cruellest ill-usage! Bab, instead of moping in despair, should bless her stars, for she was not tied to any creature. Verily she was as perverse as Cupid himself; for no doubt she would have taken a drubbing from the one dear hand, and have enjoyed it!

Certainly Bab's nerves had received a grievous twist. When the rioters went forth, she, who used to be so brave, winced and cowered at the noise, which was considerable; for, as may be supposed, the ladies and gentlemen of the Close were not behindhand, but flew out with table-legs and chair-backs—any available weapon—and added their quota to the din.

As we are aware, the postern entrance to the Close was commanded by a shambling tavern, over whose lintel as a sign was inscribed this apposite inscription:

'DRUNK FOR A PENNY.
DEAD DRUNK FOR TUPPENCE.
CLEAN STRAW FOR NOTHING.'

The landlord eloquently wrapped his sign in crape for Madam Gin's demise, which mightily inflamed the anger of his clients. They tore down the cage and pillory on Long Southwark Rise, set fire to the Pye Powder Court hard by, made bonfires of its wainscoting, singing festive songs in wheeling circle, like witches at a Sabbat.

How diverting to West-End pleasure-seekers! In old days how Bab would have rallied her army of swains, and have arrived in imperial state to applaud the rioters, and enjoy the junketing! Alack! how changed was she! As shout rose above shout, and lurid light flickered through the casement, she only shrank against the grimy wall, and pined for the return of Charlotte.

Has it been forgotten that Lord Forfar's lodging, when in town, was at the Bear? 'Twas convenient, for the hostelry was one of the very best; and yet there were so many queer personages about, that none took note of suspicious characters—an important point to one who dabbled in treason. If the Chevalier himself had looked out of window Colonel de Veil would have thought twice ere he advanced to take him.

A case in point occurred in the matter of Burnworth, the noted collector, on whose head was a reward of no less than five hundred guineas. That dauntless robber, out of idle bravado, established himself in broad day on a settle without the Bear,

from whence he could see the three prisons of the Marshalsea, the King's Bench, and the Whyte Lion, and called for a pot of ale. Though known to every passer-by, he lounged unmolested. Perceiving the keeper of the Borough Bridewell passing, he beckoned him, and bade him drink, holding a pot in one hand, a cocked pistol in the other, and the two for an hour sat side by side in social intercourse; which singular spectacle so tickled the Southwarkers, that they gathered in a crowd and gave three huzzas for the bold jolly highwayman.

Since my Lord Forfar chose to reside here, was it not natural that skittish Mrs. Belfield should claim the hospitality of her betrothed in order to witness the sport? Gervas, who was a bit precise and square-toed, scarcely approved; but Mr. Crump, who chanced to be present when the suggestion was made, took it up for reasons of his own, and made up a party on his own account. He engaged the first-floor over the portal, which commanded the bridge as well as Long Southwark Street; ordered a sumptuous repast, and invited such a gathering as would appreciate the festive occasion.

Mrs. Pamela deigned to preside. Crimp, Cramp, and Crumpling were livelier than fleas. Young Mr. Fielding, the new novelist, was there, and his portly *protegée*, Madam Pritchard, whose voice was like a grenadier's; and Mr. and Mrs. Cibber came, and many more besides. The ladies of quality laughed

so loud that such cits as were about gazed up at the windows and stood watching, ready to fly at a moment's notice on the advent of the rioters.

Sir Charles, muffled in a cloak with hat drawn down, revolving the chance of supper, sauntered through the postern, down Pepper Alley, into Long Southwark, and was attracted, as others were, by the uproarious doings at the hostelry.

The windows were open, wax candles flared on the well-furnished table, and Charlotte sighed as she marked the viands. If only she could filch one dish for Barbara!

Presently a tall man came out alone upon the balcony, and stood apparently in reverie of an unpleasant kind, for his lips were set and his teeth clenched. It was Lord Forfar; and Charlotte, drawing close to be under a friendly shadow, looked up and surveyed him with interest. Some casual remark at the table had probably vexed my lord. They chattered so loud within that all they said was audible. Theophilus was speaking. Oh, if she, Charlotte, could only get to speak to him! Her brother, despite his fear of his parent, had always been good in secret to his sister, though he dared not openly encourage her. If he knew what difficulties and dangers hemmed her about he would help now.

'There never,' he was saying, 'was so pitiable a fall! She lives, or did, within a stone's-throw of this very house; is probably in abject want. God bless

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your kind hearts, ladies! If ye will subscribe now of your bounty, we'll sally forth and seek her out. She'll be surprised to see old friends.'

'Indeed! the once celebrated Barbara Philpot?' Honest Jack inquired carelessly. 'I always feared she'd come to trouble, for dissipation is the vainest of remedies.'

'You admired her vastly once,' Crimp simpered. 'I vow you men are the most deceiving toads!'

'I pray you change the subject,' Pamela said coldly. 'To our sex fallen women are not pleasant.'

'Her own sister!' Gervas muttered between his teeth, with troubled brow.

'If she be fallen, the more need for succour,' suggested Theo. 'Come—here is my hat—drop in your guineas, ladies; then we'll go round with our offering.'

'No, no!' interrupted with haste Sir Robert's secretary. 'I know, by chance, where she abides—a place not fit for ladies—'tis reeking with the sickness.'

The three Miss Mostyns cackled in chorus; vowed they were vapourish; called for cinnamon-water and pouncet-boxes; swore that they felt symptoms already of the fell distemper; declined to be calmed by aught but by a big bumper of champagne; and made such a hubbub, in which Madam Cibber shrilly joined, that Charlotte, moaning, fled.

'Alas!' she wailed as she sped over the bridge;

'tis the pretended good who fail in charity! The surest way to reap results of friendship is to make a contract with the scapegraces!'

Bearding the danger, she would again go to the Tennis Court; and, as she warily stole thither, indignation burned within her breast. Lord Forfar, who was reckoned a good man, had not a drop of pity for weak, suffering, broken woman. He could be only disgusted and superior! Mr. Crump, an old flame, was worse. Why, but for his ill-timed caution a purse would have been made up—both Bab and Charlotte would have been freed from want for many a day!

Charlotte's instinct had always mistrusted the burly, handsome man with the glassy blue eyes too far apart. Had she watched patiently, instead of fleeing away in a whirlwind of distress, she might have changed her opinion of one man, and have had it confirmed about the other; for by-and-by, the street remaining quiet, Mr. Crump, Mrs. Belfield, and Madam Cibber gathered in a group on the balcony, and conversed in low tones.

'Is it true,' Pamela asked, 'about the jail-fever?'

To which Sir Robert's secretary answered:

'The whole neighbourhood is equally infected. Be not afraid; here the river-breezes save us.'

'Apropos,' remarked Madam Cibber, 'I'd a visit to-day from Mother Mapp, who grows uneasy. Charlotte and that woman have got together again;

and she fears that the latter, who is always roving, may look up her old allies. Charlotte's too mad, I say; what think you?'

Crump muttered a curse. How untoward was this! 'Twas his plan that the victim should be left alone till she was willing to surrender at discretion. Charlotte might make much mischief.

My Lord Forfar, still apparently vexed, now joined the group, and announced his intention on the morrow of investigating the case of Mrs. Philpot.

'A strange case; an inexplicable case,' he mused. 'Though she frustrated our dearest schemes with regard to Walpole, she compelled my admiration by her wit and undaunted courage, let alone her loveliness. I knew nothing of her grievous strait. Where doth she abide? I certainly will make a pilgrimage.'

Crump looked confused and glanced appealingly to the ladies. Pamela came to the rescue with a light titter.

'Best wait to learn if you be welcome,' she observed archly. 'My betrothed is deeply smitten I perceive, yet am I not jealous! Learn, O soft-hearted, too easily gulled knight-errant!—though in pity for your weakness it hath been concealed from you—that the fascinating Barbara resides in Montagu Close, where she occupies a single chamber—*with a man!*'

A shade of disappointment crossed Lord Forfar's countenance. Pamela almost wished she had not

been so artful; for her betrothed replied with chill disdain:

"If that be true, then am I much concerned. Since you are so well informed, why have you not stood 'twixt her and overwhelming temptation? Have you forgot, O woman! that, though fallen and degraded she may be, Barbara Philpot is your sister?'

CHAPTER III.

'THE PILGRIM CALLS.'

MR. CRUMP'S festivity was somewhat of a failure, for on his selected evening the rioters failed to rise to the desirable level of friskiness, in consequence of which, maybe, the party separated in doleful dumps. The Mostyns were querulous, for time was going on, and their good names received daily a plaguy number of dints; added to which their purses assumed a consumptive aspect, for not only did dire necessity compel a manipulating of the cards, but sometimes a raid scarce dissimulated with crooked fingers upon heaps of adjacent coin, which for the nonce belonged to others. 'Tis sadly true that one link of evil will hang on to another, till the slip assumes the formidable proportions of a tree.

People now found it advisable to turn the coldest of shoulders to the Mostyns—to forget to invite them to assemblies or ridottos—some even openly explained

that they were indecent hags, with harpy claws and tongues of venom. All this being candidly accepted and discussed among the trio, they had resolved that one of them should sacrifice herself for the behoof of the rest upon the altar of duty, and set a dilapidated cap at Mr. Crump.

He was brawny, and to some fancies good-looking. His fortunes were prodigiously improving under the never-swerving patronage of the Minister of Peace; and therefore it behoved prudent maidens to forget that his father was originally a running footman, and afterwards a spy, who was so successful in intercepting treasonable correspondence 'twixt Harwich and Calais that he was enabled to give his son a sort of education. What if his eyes were too far apart, his lips suggestive of unbridled passions? He was clearly a coming man, and 'twas impertinent and ill-bred to ignore a concentrated shower of darts from three leering amazons. The only time he had been stirred during the evening was during the talk about that Philpot hussy. Is it wonderful, then, that the Mostyns, so genteely clinging in public, went home and rent each other?

Pamela was little more satisfied than they, for, goaded by some demon, she had half dropped her mask under the observant eye of her betrothed, and the effect of a glimpse of her own gorgon face was ominous as regarded the future. To a duchess, of course, it can matter little what the duke thinks of

her. A woman's tongue is always longer than a man's, and in superior circles men, even when most exasperated, refrain from banging their wives against the doorpost. But what if he wasn't going to be a duke? There was the rub. He was moody, depressed, anxious, sad, lugubrious; more reserved than heretofore as to hopes and aspirations. Oh! if he were concealing something which a far-sighted and prudent lady ought to know; if some day an unexpected shower were to souse upon her head! How little comfort would it be then that he as well as she were drenched! He was a boorish fellow at the best. Do what she would, 'twas impossible to keep the mask on always; and when it slipped a little he grew solemn and prim and rude.

On his side Gervas was more deeply moved than even she suspected, for he saw her now with vision unobscured, as Bab would have wished him to see her, and was enveloped in dismay. To have spoken so hardly of her father's child plunged to the lips in misfortune, she must be innately base and unwomanly; not the mere ruffled bird whose feathers only needed gentle smoothing to render its plumage glossy.

Lord Forfar tried to coin excuses for his affianced, but on each new occasion the task became more difficult and more distasteful; and a conviction began to haunt him (which so many only discover after the return from church) that the goddess he

worshipped was the work of his own imagination. Having arrived at this dismal conclusion, he was only held from breaking an engagement that became each day more irksome by a punctilious and old-fashioned sense of honour. As to Crump, he was disgusted with everyone, for his passions were unaccustomed to be curbed, and his will was strong. It was exasperating, then, that the fish that he had played with such skill and patience and dexterity should persist in evading a fly; slip through the meshes of the finest net. Ever so many times the morsel had almost dropped into his mouth; then it had bobbed aside. 'Twas a most provoking game of bobcherry, this; and he became so annoyed, so racked by unassuaged desires, that he even contemplated following the example of little Byron, and whisking away his victim in a coach. Long ago he had thought of it, but prudence intervened; for was not Barbara united in close bonds of friendship with his patron, who, though easy-going, would brook no insolence? But after all this lapse of time, sure 'twould be safe. By cunning diplomacy and skilful lying to both, he had kept the two apart.

Sir Robert knew not of Barbara's extremity till he received the hint of non-interference with Hastang; waited as Elizabeth waited for the Essex ring, rather marvelling, in intervals of pressing business, to hear nothing of the little Whig. Barbara,

on the other hand, entrenched in pride, bitterly resented what she deemed her friend's ingratitude. All was well so far. Who could calculate on the sudden turning up of marplot Charlotte? Who could guess what whimsy might enter some day into that shuttlecock head of hers?

And Mother Mapp, too, was waxing troublesome. After the signing of a letter of license, the buying up of claims which were temporarily arranged for, in order to swell her own debt, was manifestly illegal. As for the selling of the pawned diamonds, investigation would easily bring to light the fact that Bab, bewildered and unbusiness-like, had never authorized their sale. Mother Mapp, in obeying the bidding of so important a personage as the Prime Minister's head man, as interpreted by Madam Cibber, was under the impression that 'twas a momentary pressure to determine a wavering fair. This conviction was strengthened when Bab declined to hear of the Tripoline adorer. But here had the matter been dragging on for months. The fair had not behaved as was intended and supposed; and Mother Mapp began to see that she was a catspaw, who would be dropped and allowed to shift for herself in case of inquiry. So she worried Mr. Crump, uttered jeremiads in the green-room, grumbled exceedingly, and made herself obnoxious even to the Honourable Pamela.

'Twas all mighty awkward, and everybody con-

nected with the game was equally dissatisfied. And yet how difficult to determine what it was best to do. As to giving up the siege, Honest Jack averred that it was out of the question. By hook or crook the obstinate hussy should be his own chattel to do with as he would—that was decided long since, and sworn to; and from that resolve Mr. Crump declined to stir, the more for her continued obstinacy. Yet how to vanquish such obduracy! This state of things could not go on for ever. It wasn't complimentary that she should stand out so long against her destined master. But that could be squared in the future. Who could ever have supposed that a lovely woman, who so gloried in her beauty, who so basked in the sensuous enjoyment of the good things of this life, should accept, apparently without complaint, such a bed of nettles as had been prepared for her! Yet where is the presumptuous idiot who really pretends to prophesy what a woman will do under given circumstances? In the case of females the axiom always holds good, that nought is certain but the unforeseen. The affair was in a tangle, which Mr. Crump did not at present see his way to unravel. As he strolled home, after the party at the Bear, he thought it over from all its points of view; but the more he thought, the less he saw a way out of the difficulty.

Meanwhile Barbara sat in the only chair awaiting the return of Charlotte, growing each moment more

uneasy as the clock of St. Saviour's told the hours, and the familiar step failed to echo in the Close. Grey dawn crept in and found her watching, with a new gleam of terror in her eyes.

What if something had chanced? Why had she not, rousing herself, agreed to Charlotte's proposal that the two should sally forth and act together? Pride? Much good it had done her, and much now had she to do with it!

Feverishly she rose and looked out into the green-yard. Given that another misfortune had fallen, or was about to fall, what would happen to her, Barbara? Would she be driven again to that awful last resource?

The agony of that night had well-nigh turned her brain. Why had she not leapt, and so finished with it all? Whatever might be concealed behind the veil could surely not be worse than what she had since endured? Sure God should know, since He made us, when our burthen is too heavy for our backs; and knowing, would pity rather than upbraid?

Dawn paled to daylight, and, unable to bear this rack, with thin trembling fingers Bab threw over her head a tattered scarf, and crept out, heedless of consequences. What mattered it now if she were seen by any who knew her in prosperous times, or if she were taken? If any humane wight would seize her in his arms and fling the light burthen over the

bridge among the creaking wheels, who so thankful as she?

She glided along the Close towards St. Saviour's, where a knot of folks were standing with backs turned. Glory Kilburne, his bare muscular arms akimbo, related how he'd but just arrived from Covent Garden Square, whither he'd been sent upon an errand; of how a tall young player fellow had been slain at the Rose tavern in a brawl. 'Twas wilful murder if ever it had been done, for Colonel Burgiss pinned him through and through, and the player fell with the crimson bubbling from his lips.

'They prate of our Surrey side,' grumbled a listener. 'Best look at home, I think!'

A groan startled the group, and Glory, looking round, beheld his lodger prone upon the flags.

She was dead—or near it! Quick! a surgeon. Snow-pale—stone-cold!

'A plague o' my babbling tongue!' grunted Kilburne, genuinely concerned, for he'd come to like his lodgers. 'How should I know that she was listening? 'Twas not her brother of whom I spake, but of Hildebrand Horden, of the Lane. But folks when over-wrought always think the descending hammer's for their pates!'

Tenderly Glory Kilburne and some women carried their burthen to the garret, sorrowing to mark how light it was, and laid it gently on the bed.

'Poor heart! poor heart!' sighed Glory, brushing a tear away with the back of his rough hand. '"Tis a happy release, I warrant!'

A few hours later Sir Charles came running down the Close with unribboned hair a-flying, and dashing up the ladder to his home, recoiled upon the threshold.

The sympathizing women were still gathered round; a surgeon on his knees was blooding the prostrate patient. A slow red stream poured from an arm that was almost fleshless.

'She was not dead, then?' the women whispered. 'Thank God for that! But one who was brought so low could ill withstand convulsions. How unfortunate! Ah! here was her brother. Why look so white—as white as the swooning patient? Courage, man! She is not dead, for the blood is flowing.'

Thrusting them all aside, the careworn youth fell upon the pallet on his face, and surrendered himself to his despair. The circling women wept, for there's no more woeful spectacle than agony that finds no tongue. If Barbara with shut eyes and fallen jaw lay as one dead, Charlotte was as motionless, save for a quiver now and then that passed in a spasm through her frame.

'Barbara!' at last she murmured, 'my only friend, sorrow hath been our handmaid! Take me with you if you go, for I will not stay behind, though who, if not I, should be inured to misery?'

Kilburne with bluff gentleness raised the youth and placed him on the seat, where he sat and rocked with incoherent cries as one distraught, and tore his unribboned locks.

'Your sister will rally,' the surgeon said. 'Tis a deep swoon, heavy almost as death; but it will pass, and maybe she the better.'

But Charlotte shook her head, refusing comfort. Presently she related, between exclamations of grief, that the rioters were out last night on t'other side, and she stood watching them, when a *posse* of red-robins came and netted all, herself among the rest. That taken before the Justice he had had pity for her poverty-stricken mien, and let her go. Too late! too late! for Bab was dead —her dearest, only friend—and she deserted and forlorn!

In the evening, the surgeon looked in again, and his visage grew more solemn. Barbara had recovered from the swoon, but wandered in mental labyrinths, babbling wildly, as one oppressed with dreams. He laid a kindly touch on the disconsolate youth, and shook him.

'Listen!' he said gravely; 'forget yourself, and think of your sister, who will need all your care. What rugged path she hath walked I know not. Now she hath brain-fever and delirium. Maybe she will survive, and maybe not. 'Tis a matter of careful nursing and nourishment. Her constitution's frail

and worn. Will it withstand so rude an attack as this?'

Charlotte nodded, to show that she plainly understood. The Golden Gate was ajar for Barbara. 'Is she to pass and leave me bereaved? Not yet—not yet!' wailed the wan youth, whose tears gushed down his cheeks in rivulets. What was to be done to provide that which was needed for the patient?

'Have you no friends?' the doctor asked.

'I care not!' exclaimed Sir Charles, slapping his thigh with sudden determination. 'Her pride will be wounded; yet her life may come to depend on that I've not to give. Pray Heaven in its mercy that I may not be taken on the road!'

Hatless, the youth ran down the Close, through the postern, scudded over the bridge, and never stopped till, panting for breath, he had reached the lodging of Theophilus. Sure 'twas a madman! The maid who opened the door strove to slam it in his face; but he was desperate.

''Tis life or death!' he cried, keeping it open with his foot. 'Theophilus! brother! It is I! your wretched, persecuted Charlotte!'

How fortunate it was—among a host of untoward circumstances—that Madam Cibber was abroad! Had she been at home there might have been more trouble. Theo squinted up and down, bit his nails and wavered. He was trying to curry favour at this moment with his parent by assuming respectability.

What if he were seen in the public street with this tattered dishevelled scarecrow who was his sister? But, indeed, her tale was harrowing, and he was always fond of Bab. Such earnest pleading as his sister's might not be withstood. A coach to London Bridge. At least, the public should not behold the scarecrow.

* * * * * *

The ice was broken at last, and Barbara was saved. The state of proud repression, of soul-numbness, in which as in a shroud she'd wrapped herself, was like a straight road that led, if life were spared, only to one building—the madhouse. She was pining slowly; her sanity was threatened. The crisis arrived, and she tottered for a second time on the verge of another world. For long she lay unconscious, battling with the Pilgrim—importunate now—whom she'd summoned before in vain; 'gainst whom, when he tardily arrived, she fought and tussled. For long she hovered on the brink, tenderly watched and cared for; and when at last her eyes looked out with reason on the little room, she shut them quickly, supposing she saw a vision.

Yet when again she looked, there was the vision still—a picture in flesh and blood. 'Twas the same uncomely garret, yet so different. There was furniture about—a host of little comforts. She reposed on a comfortable bed; the pallet of gruesome memory was in a corner, and on it Charlotte, dressed,

but sleeping. On a table — actually! — a silver candlestick! By a window two men against the light—one fat, one thin. Was it possible?—Wilks and Sir Robert Walpole?

The latter came clumsily forward on tiptoe in the scarlet cloak she knew so well, attached by golden tassels.

'The little Whig's awake!' he said, with a rumbling chuckle and husky clearing of the throat that seemed to her weakness like a clap of thunder. 'Oh what a naughty little Whig never to have sent to me! The haughty naughty damosel!'

And Wilks, the soft-hearted cynic, was standing smiling over her.

'She's turned the corner,' he remarked, with moisture in his eyes. 'Shaken off the volcano of gall that, like other evil things of our own making, was sure to recoil upon her head.'

It was marvellous—like a fairy tale! The patient closed her lids and slept again. Again she woke, and again the scene was changed. A nurse was gliding about, while faithful Charlotte, clapping hands, beamed down upon her.

Wilks had spoken truth. The mountain-weight was somehow gone. Something intangible seemed to have melted. She felt as the person in the miracle must have felt when the tearing devil had departed, and he sat clothed in his right mind. Only by very very slow degrees did the fact dawn on her.

Wounded pride keeps itself green by cataplasms of its own rank shoots; and though the hurt may he cicatrized, the hidden ailment rankles still.

At first her weakened mind was fully occupied with marvelling, and, like an exhausted child, she was perforce compelled to accept things as they came.

Theophilus, it by-and-by transpired, being warned by the surgeon of the patient's critical state, had been alarmed, and had called in Wilks, who was recently returned from his triumphant Irish campaign, to divide responsibility. Together they had sifted matters—a difficult business till Mother Mapp, haled upon the scene, had been stricken with remorse, and made confession—not complete and entire, but as much as she thought would hold herself free from blame. Not so much even as this, for her mouth at an early stage was stopped by Theo, who did not desire that his wife's peccadilloes should be aired for the behoof of Wilks.

'Twas evidently a mistake, he lightly concluded. For obvious reasons the diamond episode must be hushed up. For the sake of all parties it must not come to trial. And that illegal buying up of claims! Too crafty Mother Mapp! She might howl and protest her innocence, but Mr. Theo was an experienced bird.

Now Mr. Wilks, who was upright in his dealings, objected to dabbling in foul waters. He had his faults, he was aware; but also, thank Heaven, his

virtues. Long ago he had bidden Bab when in a pickle to apply to him, and could not conceive why she had not done so. But girls—specially beauties—are sadly pig-headed: made up of follies which they invariably and properly regret, usually when these cannot be remedied.

Happily on this occasion it was not too late. He, Wilks, would settle the diamond difficulty, and Mother Mapp would settle the other. The bargain was perfectly fair, for that lady had earned the cart's-tail.

'Oh, Mr. Wilks!' she howled, 'is a poor honest woman to lose her money?'

'Better,' replied that caustic personage, 'than trot under the lash from Paul's to Holborn Bars.'

Thus was it arranged.

It still remained to settle what was to be done with Barbara. Upon this subject the Duchess of Queensberry, when called into council, had words to say. She had grown tired of quarrelling with the Court, missed the daily wrangles with the departed pocket-poet.

If Mrs. Philpot would promise to behave decently in future, and not fly out, she said, with the lofty condescension that becomes duchesses, she would forget the scandals of the past and adopt her.

Sir Robert swore that her Grace was funnier than any low-comedy man; and laughed to such an extent that his cheeks grew purple, and the Duchess

was compelled to beat his fat back to the detriment of her own fan, lest haply he should choke before her eyes.

She failed to see the jest, she sniffed. When she said 'adopt,' she did not mean as a daughter (God forbid!), but as a companion—a sort of female Gay—always premising that the haughty slut must promise to be meek and mild.

'How long would the compact last?' Sir Robert roared. 'The two haughtiest women in all England! There would be caps on the green, and wigs too, in about half a minute.'

Sir Robert was pleased to be ribald; yet there was truth in the objection, her Grace admitted, as she rubbed her nose. Such a flaunting, stiff-necked minx was little likely to shine in servitude. Pity! for she'd make a splendid reader, and her Grace was in the habit of being read to sleep.

Again the incorrigible Minister nearly fell a prey to apoplexy; for the idea of Bab sitting patiently by the Duchess's bedside in the small hours, and droning Mr. Fielding's latest effort till her Grace, in a frilled nightcap, should condescend to doze, was really too entrancing!

'Perhaps others, then, who were so clever, could suggest something less laughable?' perked the Duchess.

Wilks was for a return to the stage—not just at present; for indeed the noise of Bab's adventures

had gone round and been the talk of the town for at least the orthodox nine days; and 'twould be better to defer a bow before the public till the escapade should be forgotten.

Theo differed from Mr. Wilks. The *beau monde* would rush to look on the woman who had gone through such adventures; the stage platforms would be crammed; the actors would scarce have room to breathe, let alone move!

Mr. Wilks returned a curt answer. Bab should return to the theatre, if he might have an opinion, not as a raree-show, but as an artist.

In any case there must be a period of rest, for her constitution had been severely tried. A year at least must pass. The question was, how was she to kill the intervening time? how live in some decorous way compatible with self-respect?

The conclave looked one at another. It was a puzzle; for froward Bab was as difficult to lead even as the King, which was saying much.

'If it's merely a matter of money, that is easily got over,' declared Sir Robert. 'I blame myself exceedingly for my negligence; after what she did for me, 'twas criminal, and I shall never forgive myself (though worried out of my life by those Dawley fiends) for such culpable carelessness. Next to Skerrit and the Queen, I love her best of anyone on earth! I've chosen an odd way of showing it. *Mea culpa!* How can I best display regret?'

There was one standing behind Sir Robert's seat whose eyes were the more vigilantly watching that his tongue was still. His brow to the roots of his auburn hair was wet with the dew of irresolution. Must it be done, after all his scheming? Must he make the risky dive? His lips twitched. His glazed eyes seemed to have sunk into his head. An acute struggle was waging in his breast; for all his deft plans were foiled. His victim, receding from his grasp, was almost out of arm-reach. Yes, come what might, it must be done! Sir Robert's remarks put a period to his wavering.

Stepping forward, with a tremor in his voice, over which he tried in vain to obtain mastery, and a strange paleness blanching his usually ruddy cheek, he hemmed, and spake with becoming modesty.

If one so lowly might presume to open his lips in such distinguished company—here her Grace eyed him through a quizzing-glass, and observed with approval that even plebeians, when they live with the great, can cultivate something of the *bel air*—if, in fact, Sir Robert's secretary might dare to offer a suggestion, 'twas only because encouraged by the favours he had received from a kind patron's condescension. He was ready, if it was deemed desirable, to give his hand where his heart had long been. He would marry Mrs. Philpot, and at the end of the season of rest she might return, with his approval, to the boards.

Having spoken, with a well-executed bow the modest man retired.

The very thing! All were delighted. The Duchess, like every matron, was an inveterate matchmaker, and quite forgot how she had herself warned her *protégée* against espousing Crump. But then matters were changed now. The hussy had chosen to consort with blacklegs, even to house with cutthroats and ruffians; had made such a mess of a promising career as to have been goaded into seeking a last refuge in the Thames. All things considered, a match with Crump would be the very best arrangement. Sir Robert would doubtless provide the husband with sufficient income—by means of snug sinecures—to keep a wife with *éclat*. Who should know how to manage this, if not he? She, the Duchess, would supply plate and linen.

Her Grace had settled everything so completely to her satisfaction, that it only occurred as an afterthought that the bride knew nothing of it. Of course she must be told. Being such a stiff-necked jade and queen of minxes, it was on the cards she would decline the pleasant future which kind friends were preparing.

Pressure must be applied for her own good. Her Grace would argue and shake an admonishing fan while Sir Robert lectured. But when it came to the Minister's turn to apply the screw, he found it was not needed. She looked up in his face with a sweet

unearthly smile, which he was at a loss to understand, and said, with a soft sigh :

'If you wish it, it shall be so. But he must take me from here. I'll be married from this garret-chamber.'

Sir Robert patted her worn cheek. Was ever such a whimsical bit of goods? The Duchess had told her 'twas the only door left open. Sure they who were so kind as to be interested should know best. 'Twas too true she had made a mess of it. Her future was in the hands of her good friends. If they were satisfied, so would she be. What could it matter what next befell the sport of Fortune, once her pampered child? Tired of aimless struggling, all she craved was peace.

It was vastly nice. Everybody was pleased but Wilks, who justly deemed that so sudden a surrender was unnatural; everything she did was, to his blundering male brain, unnatural. Why she had ever broken out in that singular way he could not comprehend. Why, with equally startling rapidity, did she now succumb? Even the breaking out, if reprehensible, was less uncanny. He chose a quiet moment to ask the question.

'If you'd rather not be Madam Crump,' he said, 'I will stand by you.'

She smiled the same sweet smile and pressed his hand, then slowly said: 'What doth it signify? Jack Crump or Glory Kilburne?'

'Who's Glory Kilburne?' inquired Wilks.

'An honest man, the Clink scavenger—*and eke the sexton.*'

How ghastly a suggestion! She was certainly a curious specimen of womanhood.

One other person objected to the match. With a face of terror Charlotte fell at Bab's feet, as her wild way was, and begged and implored her not to do this fatal thing.

'Oh, do not! Do not!' she sobbed. 'Better any day the Thames!'

'Peace! How now, Cassandra?' Barbara explained, as if repeating a lesson. ''Twill throw an ægis over my sullied past. Do not cry, my dear. What must be, will be. Never heed your Barbara; what of my Charlotte? She too must be provided for, the wolf kept from her door. See what comes of battering one's wings! I, the wayward and imperious, have suddenly turned fatalist.'

Although she could wash her hands of her own future, she was anxious about Charlotte's; but the fitful wastrel was once more obdurate. She was a cork upon the waters, and must be so to the end. She was wedded to her male attire and vagabond way of life. She would earn her own living somehow in a hand-to-mouth manner as heretofore.

Theo was much exercised over the future of Charlotte. What a pity she could not, like him, put on at least a semblance of respectability. 'Tis not difficult when you try, and it will come on and off like a gar-

ment. Through his own career he had not erred much on that side. True; but then a man and a woman are so different! Yet, after all, Charlotte was a man. 'Twas six years since she had finally abjured petticoats.

'What next, poor sister?' he laughed, with indulgence in his squint. 'Must we indeed find for thee a male occupation? Thou hast done well as a waiter in a public garden. I know of a fine gentleman about St. James's, who is in need of a friseur. I've admired thy prowess in the art of hairdressing. Would such a post suit thee? That thou art not French or impudent enough would be a drawback, we must own; but thou mightest make shift to mend it. Thine own table and twenty guineas a year, and nought to do but dress thy master's head.'

'Yes!' cried Charlotte, with glad alacrity; 'the very thing if he be a Member of Parliament, for should I not be free to walk the streets without fear of the foes of liberty? Barbara, I can dress hair deftly, can I not? Wilt thou speak up for me? I've often combed those locks.'

Theo's suggestion had been meant as a joke, and yet it jumped with Charlotte's present whim, and the spirit of mischief within her brother was titillated. 'Twould be great fun! His sister's fancy would soon pass, and then what merriment at the expense of the young bachelor who had gravely placed his

head every morning under a girl's hands! And what a stab for Colley when he came to know of it! On that account he, Theo, must prudently seem to keep out of the affair; but 'twould be exceedingly droll. The gentleman was a Vice-Chamberlain, and a fop.

Even Bab's sense of humour was touched when she heard that it was Medlicote. She smiled, and Charlotte kissed her, for the dear face was lighted up with a glimmer of pristine roguishness. If only she were not destined to take Crump! What must be, must be. Fate shakes up in his bag our various destinies, and hands them out pell-mell.

'O Fate, Fate! be kind to Barbara!' was Charlotte's prayer. 'She hath suffered overmuch. The night is dark and cold, but the sun cometh with the morning. Say, O Fate, that she hath been sufficiently disciplined. Be good to much-suffering Barbara!'

During her convalescence, which was slow and laborious, it became patent to all that Barbara was entirely altered. During the long days she lay back thinking, thinking; and by the time she could rise, and on Charlotte's arm totter across the chamber, she had passed into a third phase of character—an advanced stage of mental development—whether for good or evil remained to be discovered. When the soul is placed upon the rack and the cords stretched, the tendons and sinews are either cracked and

crippled irretrievably, or rendered supple and pliant. The patient emerges from Nature's torture-chamber metamorphosed, either for better or worse.

Charlotte's troubles had unhinged her intellect, making her froward and unstable as an infant, but with an infant's loving faith and trustfulness. Bab's nature, cast in a more masculine mould, did not shrink and twist awry. As she lay in the darkened room gazing up at the discoloured ceiling, her mind was working though her body was inert. The abortive efforts, the useless aspirations, the futile struggles of the past, moved in a solemn procession of retrospect, and she was grieved by the tawdry spectacle. 'Tis a happy moment for all of us when we discover how small we are, cease to suppose that our fellows must bow before our vast importance, that the constellations, if they had manners, would stop their stately march for our convenience.

How full of wisdom is the legend of Canute! Sure if a modern Solomon were to be offered special gifts, the first he should demand would be Humility.

Bab, as she reviewed her stormy life with its disappointments, its unsatisfying successes, understood for the first time how little it matters what befalls —how useless are the struggles and the fights; and with the conviction came a sense of calm, complete, entire, refreshing. Though we rail and writhe under the operation of control, how hideous is the human animal undisciplined! We have but to watch the

progress of a male child from boyhood to adolescence to feel this. A bullying tyrant is a boy—conceited, cruel, selfish. When we look on him and his tendencies to ill, however good his breeding, 'tis a salutary lesson for us; for even our perfect selves were like that once, till checked and restrained by a sharp and steady hand.

By the shock of the crisis and its accompanying weakness, the girl's stiff neck was bent at last. Bab saw that wrong, and sorrow, and trouble are part and parcel of our life, that their mission is one of chastening; to render us gentle, compassionate, forgetful of our own desires. She was resolved to fight no more, to take the world as she found it, and make the best of it; and I regret to say that when he marked the change, her old friend Sir Robert Walpole was somewhat disappointed. A dish without pepper is apt to be insipid. A meek woman may be a crown of glory to her husband, an angel may be all very well in heaven, but neither is calculated to prove an amusing companion to mundane acquaintances. Skerrit, for instance, was a darling; but she had a serpent's tooth and a most shrewish temper. Had she cultivated the Christian virtues, she would soon have palled on her admirer, and Rosamond would shortly have been expelled from her bower to make way for a livelier inmate.

'Tis sad but true. The Christian virtues are good for us individually as imperfect and halting beings

who are matriculating for a better sphere; but to the vast throng who form the workaday world, they are monstrous dull and mawkish.

So to Sir Robert his little Whig was not improved by meek resignation, but needed, in his opinion, a good shaking. This being admitted, the best dose for his favourite was clearly matrimony—a husband who was not too good, nor yet too great a rake.

Everybody being agreed upon this point, Barbara simply submitted, marvelling a little at the nervousness of her affianced, at his fits of agitation. He was a strange man, was Honest Jack Crump! Would he blow hot and cold to the end? What would he be like in the sanctity of the *ménage?* There were moments when he was all afire; others when he seemed to shrink from his promised wife. What could be the meaning of it? Was it that he regretted an act to which he was goaded by his passions?

Well, well; what is to be, must be. In her new *rôle* of acquiescence to everything Bab sighed quietly. 'Twas evident that all along Fate had destined them for each other, and brooked no more resistance.

The Duchess of Queensberry displayed much interest, amazing the neighbourhood by her fine equipage; never ceasing to complain, however, that her outraged chairmen slipped on the slabby stones of the green-yard; that the rakes in sanctuary had abandoned, with liberty, combs and soap and water.

She rallied the happy man on his fits of indecision. Daphnis, as a good bridegroom, she declared, stands behind his Chloe's chair, attentive, with a napkin. Serve her faithfully to-day, friend, and she'll serve you for ever after.

It certainly was a strange wedding. As the day approached Mr. Crump seemed to fling aside the remnants of uncertainty, and finally, with rather vulgar boisterousness, to accept his *rôle*. If the capricious beauty chose to be married from her garret, she should have her way. The Bear for the nonce should keep open house.

'My purse will stand it,' he cried, with a swaggering jocularity that seemed somewhat forced. 'Save guineas on my wedding-day? Never! Provide a sumptuous feast, O Boniface, though I go to grass afterwards with his Majesty the King of Assyria! Aye! such a repast as shall not be cooked in the mere paltry poaching of an egg!'

He hired a gilt chariot, too, though 'twas not twenty yards to the door of old St. Saviour's. Took up his abode at the Bear, where tailors and wig-makers laboured three hours in equipping him for victory, appearing splendid at last in a milk-white velvet coat turned up with azure, adorned with silver frogs. The much-dreaded Southwark beaux gathered in force, with hats over the left eye, a tinselled crew of dangerous rufflers. A contingent from the slaughter-houses provided rough music

with marrow-bones and cleavers; the gentlemen and ladies of the Close turned out with saucepans, shovels, kettles, making a glorious clatter; and but for the solemnity of the occasion would have resented the appearance of the foot-guards, who, when they heard of the affair, sent down their drummers as a token of gratitude for favours.

Bab was more touched by this trait of remembrance of the little she had been able to do for the poor fellows than any of the attentions showered on her. How long ago it seemed since she dressed the soldiery, and was saluted as she passed into the Mall! But the past was a closed book now, not to be reopened.

Sir Robert, in a clean coat and brand-new ribbon and his diamond star (in spite of proximity of Southwark rufflers), gave away the bride, and made a pretty speech. Charlotte stood behind, observing with a mournful touch of fun that she was page as well as bridesmaid, and must learn the duties of servitude before entering on a new office. As she passed under the lintel of the Bear upon her husband's arm, Bab threw around one hasty apprehensive glance, which watchful Charlotte interpreted aright, and shook her head.

No! my Lord Forfar was away, had been absent several weeks on business; was staying, it was thought, at Dawley. What mattered it now where he was staying, or what doing? Was not the book

of the past closed? Thank Heaven! he never knew the secret, and never should. Why should he care to know? 'Twas well to remember that. Her big and burly husband was a fine handsome fellow, though his eyes might resemble the haddock's; the ladies of the Close had audibly declared as much, who were good judges of such beauty. With Heaven's help she would be a true and faithful wife to him through good and evil report. Yes, the book was closed; shut and clamped-to for ever.

CHAPTER IV.

'CHECK TO YOUR KNIGHT.'

THE happy couple departed for Kensington to enjoy the country air; but before they went Bab made a last effort to shake the resolve of Charlotte. In vain. She was bitten with the new fancy to turn friseur, and importuned her brother as to the place.

Mr. Medlicote was vastly nice, and asked a host of questions. Although not so foppish as Lord Belvedere, he was as partial as most pretty fellows to the adornments of dress, and was rendered plaintive by experience on the subject of domestics.

'I never have a footman,' he observed, 'but wears his own hair, so my friseur must dress their heads as well as their master's. I allow 'em a crown a week for gloves and powder, though the impudent rascals don't deserve as much. Yet if I didn't they'd steal mine. I don't know what they're coming to, with their modish pertness! Not one

but hath a watch and seals, and a snuffbox with the best orangerie; while as for their conduct in the upper gallery, one can't hear the play for their bawling. 'Tis a mercy they're forbidden swords.'

Mr. Medlicote had dismissed his last valet for drink; then had himself *coiffé* by a man from the Lock of Hair, who kept him waiting once for five hours in hopeless *déshabillé* when wanted by the Queen. This threw him in such a rage that he resolved to set up a private perukier who should be a species of factotum; not wearing livery, or appearing with the servants.

To this end it was necessary to find a genteel young person of refined manners—one who could not read nor write; for a fellow who can write will draw petitions, while one who can read can ruin reputations.

There was an interesting air of distinction about Charlotte which pleased Ranulph at first sight; and the candidate, having solemnly declared that she knew not an A from a bull's foot, was duly inducted into office.

And now for Charlotte as well as Barbara ensued an interval of peace. Servants were liable to be pressed and sent to sea; but on the other hand, by virtue of a statute which was not annulled till 1770, the footmen of Peers and Members of Parliament were protected from arrest for debt during the sitting of the Houses; all domestics of

persons holding office about the Court during the entire year.

Thus was Charlotte free to walk the streets at pleasure without glancing apprehensively over the shoulder, and at the same time was not submitted to the ignominy of parti-coloured clothes and shoulder-knot. She occupied a nook on the ground-floor of St. James's Palace in the Vice-Chamberlain's apartment, hard by the side wicket; and when her work was done was at liberty to do as she listed. She was so quiet and reserved that Mr. Medlicote took quite a fancy to the new-comer, supposing her, as Glory Kilburne had done, to be a gentleman under a cloud.

Whilst his head was being arranged by her deft fingers, he communed with his friseur, who was a miracle of respectful silence, delivering improving lectures upon various subjects, especially on the wickedness of servants.

'Don't mix with 'em,' he warned the assiduous perukier, 'for they're loose varmint, and ungrateful wretches, who serve you according to your vails; then tell your secrets and abuse your failings in public nine-pin alleys, ginshops, cellars, places of low rendezvous. They are born in idleness, nurtured in drink and debauchery. Don't mimic a master's smartness, as most of 'em do, filching his steinkirks and silk stockings. Be always dressed well and modestly. Instead of hieing to Monmouth Street to

obtain the discarded embroidery of some Minister of State, get a genteel tailor to supply a gentleman's undress, and be always equipped with nicety. I ask no menial service from you, since I perceive you are above your class, and expect you to behave accordingly.'

From which discourse it may be gathered that Charlotte slipped into the good graces of her master. All was well for the present; she was not in fear of recognition. Sir Robert had seen her at Montagu Close with Bab; but as 'twould be indecorous in a Minister to attend a Vice-Chamberlain's *levée*, there was little chance of their meeting.

Whilst standing aloof from them, the manners of the royal domestics were new and amusing to Charlotte. They minced with bent knees like beaux; were drilled by a severe house-steward as to the graceful bearing of a flambeau before a chair, the polite conduct of a door-knocker, the sensible delivery of a 'How d' ye?' In case she should ever choose to return to the playhouse, she learnt many a trick for a servant's *rôle:* the manner of angling for vails whilst helping on a coat; indulging in wild bets in imitation of their betters—such as, for instance, which of two frogs could leap the highest; or which swim better in a pond, a hedgehog or a guinea-pig.

Her new life suited Charlotte on many counts. Novelty to her Bohemian blood was as a breath of

fresh air, wholesome and reviving. A good deal of spare time was on her hands, which suited her roving disposition by permitting her to wander for hours; a proclivity in which she freely indulged herself, strolling sometimes in the quiet eventide over the rough road to Kensington to look on her dear patroness, or choosing the scarce less dangerous route by river-side, eyrie of smugglers and highwaymen.

Strange what a fascination was exerted over the warped mind of Charlotte by the vagabond life within these dens! The lawlessness, the reckless, devil-may-care bravery and carelessness of life exhibited by Burnworth and his following jumped with her humour, though she could never be induced to enrol herself under the banner.

'You would make a splendid collector,' Burnworth would say laughingly, 'a rival in masculine prowess to Hannah Snell, the female soldier.'

But she only shook her head. Though her lot had been a harsh one, she never was inclined to take up weapons and run amuck against society as foolish Barbara had done. She was always welcome in the low haunts by Execution Dock, for 'twas understood that she would never betray a friend, and was ever ready to amuse the company with a scrap from a stage-play or a dance of puppets.

A motley crew, honest and dishonest mingled, as in Montagu Close opposite; watermen, petty chap-

men, beggars, housing in seven tenements which opened one into t'other, with an exit riverwards by means of a muddy creek. From garret to cellar beds were crowded, as many as seventy or eighty sometimes occupying a single hovel from which all modesty and decency had fled.

This colony differed little from that hard by St. Saviour's, for it formed a nucleus of pestilence which was closed to authority, where such as fell sick were turned into the lanes to perish; then to be gathered by dust-carts and handed over to the surgeons. A convenient spot for malefactors this, for smugglers running their cargoes ashore found a hundred willing hands to help for a small pittance, granting in return a free passage to such as needed it aboard one of the Gravesend hoys.

For years an illicit trade that may scarce be called clandestine was carried on by a company of Jews between Execution Dock and Rotterdam; and so bold were the scoundrels through impunity as to carry their goods in public hackney-coaches, and even store them within the precincts of the Fleet!

A hotbed this for thieving and lowest debauchery, as well as fever—contagion moral as well as physical—into which Colonel de Veil threatened more than once to turn the soldiery; but he abstained from invading the hornets' nest in real earnest: his successor forty years later was memorializing my Lord

High Chancellor in vain as to a clearance of this rookery.

But Sir Charles's wayward steps were oftenest turned to Southwark. Despite want and fear and misery, Charlotte had been in some sort happy there, for the responsibility of watching over her numbed patroness had brought a content akin to happiness; and when the latter was at point of death, the humble denizens of the Close had been so kind as to warm the heart of the outcast.

The Bear assumed in her eyes a special interest. The wedding-party had assembled in its guest-chamber—a wedding against which Charlotte had in vain protested, concerning which she had felt grim forebodings, which none would share with her. Alack! that dear Barbara, for better or for worse, should now be Madam Crump. Pray Heaven disaster might be averted! She often saw my Lord Forfar there, who appeared now and again — a gloomy vision—on the balcony, or clattered away by night at a gallop over Lambeth Marsh, with hat unlooped and closely-folded roquelaure.

A mysterious individual my Lord Forfar. Severe, cold, reserved, but not unkindly he appeared to Charlotte. How whimsical that Bab, the gay, the bright, the successful, should have squandered the wealth of her love upon the unresponsive Scot! The happiest marriages are often made of the least congruous elements, but this one might never be—

betwixt them stood now a double barrier. Oh, what a pity! why did Bab consent to become Madam Crump? and yet 'twere not well to wear the willow for Lord Forfar.

The great secret having been indiscreetly babbled to her, the Jacobite became vastly interesting to Charlotte for Bab's sake. Although he wist it not, a tall pale youth was often watching him, weaving a fanciful fantastic future for him, while he sat brooding at his casement. He had something on his mind. This was quite plain to Charlotte as well as Pamela. What could it be? He was in danger perhaps, and knew it. The life of a political plotter is one long danger.

When Sir Charles, in his simple suit of sober brown, strolled along the flowery lanes to Kensington, he entertained Madam Crump with his views upon the subject of conspiracies, and Bab hearkened uneasily. The fate of the Jacobite could be naught to her, for was he not Pamela's? And yet her heart tightened at the thought of possible peril. She could almost hear the axe being sharpened for his neck. He was living in a fool's paradise, engaged on a fool's errand. 'Twas sad that the interesting schemer should so persistently cling to a Cause that was hopeless. Bab's thoughts lingered more than they should have done about her sister's swain, and after a long talk with Charlotte she would upbraid herself in private, until she sadly reflected that it

mattered not, since Gervas had never guessed the truth, and never should, please Heaven.

Meanwhile the Dawley junta were anxiously scanning events, and were by no means agreed as to the hopelessness of the Cause. On the contrary, St. John was blithe and hopeful; for despite the efforts of the never-sufficiently-to-be-hated Bluestring, the House of Hanover waxed daily more unpopular. Gervas groaned aloud and writhed under enforced inaction; but Pulteney, rubbing his hands, cried, 'Patience! give him rope enough, and the little tyrant will choke himself with little aid from us.' Even Sir Robert and his faithful henchman, Medlicote, feared as much, though they kept silence. Indeed, his most staunch friends could not say that years improved his Majesty. The new regiments and the camp in Hyde Park (expensive toys) soon ceased to amuse him, and he grew daily more dissatisfied with England, and pined for the joys of Herrenhausen. What was to be done with him?

It had been understood that his beloved principality might claim his personal attention for a brief while once in every three years; but he unblushingly set aside the agreement. Having vented his evil temper on wife, daughters, household, he boldly stated his intention of a proximate return to Hanover, although he had but recently returned. And the Pretender knocking at the door! It was too bad. The people openly said that if English air was

so distasteful, he had better stop away for good. The tale of the new houri was whispered abroad; Madam Walmoden, forsooth, and he old enough to know better! And a nasty German for a new Sultana! Was England, smarting still under the rapacity of the Kendal and others, never to be freed from greedy foreigners? 'If he must have a mistress, won't an English lass serve his turn?' cried a burly street orator, amid hisses and laughter. Verily, if the Pretender had been worth a pinch of salt, he might have stepped in at this minute and ousted the usurper. But unfortunately there was little to choose between their rival Majesties.

Gervas, as he mused upon his balcony, saw with terrible conviction that his Cause would never prosper. Unhappy the earnest man who could devote himself to such a political wraith as James III. A puppet whose feebleness of character was only equalled by his poverty of spirit. Little wonder if Lord Forfar looked gloomy; if lines of care deepened on his face, if his eye grew haggard, his brow dark. On his side Sir Robert Walpole was as disturbed as he. What was to be done to keep the King in England? The Prince of Wales was clamouring—primed by the Dawleyites—for a wife and an establishment, and the people endorsed the demand.

'The match must be made quickly, then,' quoth impatient Majesty, 'for so sure as eggs are eggs, I will spend spring at Herrenhausen;' and when he

spoke thus sharply Sir Robert knew there was no moving him.

Accordingly Walpole and his colleagues bestirred themselves, and it was announced on the 25th of April that the Princess of Saxe-Gotha was landed at Greenwich. A tall raw-boned crooked woman was the new-comer, with long arms and immense flat feet; not an ornamental acquisition, but, like Mercutio's wound, she'd serve.

In spite of the King's impatience Walpole shrewdly resolved to amuse the people with a pageant, and endeavour to revive moribund loyalty with panoply and glitter. As a show 'twas mighty fine, and the dazzled populace crowed with joy. Everyone wore new clothes; the tailors made a fortune; so did the confectioners. Grafton, St. Albans, Newcastle, vied with each other in splendour, wearing each a suit which cost five hundred guineas. His Grace of Marlborough was in white velvet covered with *point d' Espagne;* my Lord Euston in gold tissue; the Duke of Montagu in brocade crusted with precious stones. Gowns were buttoned with diamonds; hoops spread to a prodigious size for the better display of jewels. The royal feast was on a par in magnificence: for was there not on the centre of the table a pyramid of shellfish nine feet high; temples, groups of statuary, landscapes, all cunningly fashioned in blomonges and pastry; jelly and savoury cake; peacocks served in their feathers, and pies

full of living birds? While as for the display of gold and silver, did not the City Companies rummage out their stores and lend their choicest plate?

It was hard upon Sir Robert that all his trouble should be of none effect. Prince Frederick made himself as ingeniously disagreeable as usual; the King packed up his valise; and the people were disgusted. What a hopeless family!

Though, of course, 'twas an anxious time with them, the Queen and her Minister breathed more freely, as they always did when the tyrant's back was turned. Why do folks pine for sons, who, for the most part, are plagues and torments? But for Fred, Caroline would have been calmly content with her harpsichord and her books. But there were no end to the *tracasseries* devised by the royal heir for the annoyance of his mother. When almost out of patience, Sir Robert would hold up a fat finger at her in warning.

'If he spits in your face, wipe it off,' he advised, in his coarse way; 'if he sits in your lap, tell him you hope his seat is easy.'

It is not always pleasant to be taken at one's word. The Queen had said that at fifty-three she could afford to surrender claims to coquetry. His absent Majesty treated her like a man-friend with a vengeance, inditing reams of praise of his dear German houri, asking the wife's advice on points connected with the mistress. Even the least modest

of the French kings showed more respect for their spouses. The correspondence which hardworked couriers galloped with each day will be truly edifying to a later age. '*Consultez le gros homme*,' George wrote, when a suspicious ladder was found under the lady's window; '*qui a plus d'éxperience, ma chère Caroline, que vous dans ces affaires*.' Verily, 'tis amazing to reflect upon. Doubtless Caroline did consult the Minister on the delicate subject of the ladder, and dutifully reported his advice. Had she not condoned too much to be angry now over such a trifle? George knew that the tacitly accepted position of man-friend carried with it certain advantages, and the new attitude suited him to a nicety. There were to be no querulous reproaches. Caroline's firm character and clear hard head were invaluable to the King. He was not clever; she was. What more faithful ally can a man have than a wise, clear-headed wife who accepts 'trifles'? Poor woman! Her pills were numerous and acrid. The King was so charmed with Herrenhausen and Walmoden that he refused to return home, lingering week after week and month after month. The houri, knowing, perhaps, what Suffolk had endured, was shy as to coming to England. People might pelt her; the Queen would certainly snub her, in spite of the civil little note. Herrenhausen and a ladder were more satisfactory than our prudish humdrum country. It became patent to Sir Robert and his henchman that, how-

ever much he might acknowledge the value of her opinions, 'twas dangerous for his Majesty to be too long away from the Queen's influence. The people and their mouthpieces were growing terribly plain-spoken. Caricatures and pasquinades were pasted even on the palace doors, and her Majesty from her sanctum could hear the jeering remarks of the ribald populace. Worse mortification than all, when she went forth in her chair to the little library she had erected in the Green Park, the voice of pity and condolence afflicted her ears. The *rôle* of deserted Ariadne is a hard one for a proud lady. When implored to return in time, at least, for the birthday, the hoary sinner wrote, '*Vous voyez mes passions, ma chère Caroline; vous connaissez mes faiblesses.*' Passions and weaknesses, forsooth! His Majesty made little attempt to curb them! At last she told him roundly that if he dallied longer he must make a final choice between the kingdom and the principality. He would certainly find, like the unwise virgins of the legend, the door locked and bolted.

Who more distressed by the grave condition of affairs than the Honourable Pamela? Things were all awry. She was compelled to mumble slices of the unpleasant pudding made of Dead Sea apples. How mortifying, when you deem yourself knowing and profound, to have to confess that a painted old figurehead of a papa is right, while you are wrong! She knew that the grand plot depended much on

the maintenance of the standing army, or, at any rate, of the camp in Hyde Park. Time was rolling on; yet nothing was attempted. First the plotters waited for the King's absence, then for his return, then for his absence again. Fortune favours not the shilly-shally, and time seemed no object to the conspirators. Gervas was so moody and morose that the ducal coronet was visibly fading from her sight. Discontented as the people were, why not strike now? As many another impatient female has had cause to say, Pamela cried in wrath, 'Oh that I were a man!' The old wig-block, too, writ so chirpily from the Hague, that each missive was a stab. There was a lull in military operations abroad. A general pacification was on the carpet. Diplomatic antics were performing in which my Lord Belvedere's buffoonery was to have no little part. By-and-by he would return crowned with glory. He would be made an earl, and his child would be my Lady Pamela! How annoying, flat, and unprofitable! What cared she for the petty position of a poor earl's daughter—she who had seen within reach the *rôle* of a Sarah, Duchess? Was it not excruciating to be still plunged in doubt? Lord Belvedere would not, perchance, have been so cock-a-hoop could he have seen the Queen's pale anxious visage, the pursed lips of the Prime Minister. But then Gervas looked gloomier than either. Mrs. Belfield had been very rash in tying herself openly

to my Lord Forfar. Her temper got so much the better of her at this point that she recklessly showed herself in a very ugly light indeed, and was rather vexed than not that he did not cancel the engagement.

The Court was a dismal place for a lively young woman now. Pamela, torn and distracted, became so mopish that 'twas as much as she could manage to be decently civil to Medlicote, though it might come to be her interest to encourage that persistently dangling swain.

A dowerless earl's daughter! Was that to be the impotent conclusion? Looking at herself in the mirror, she could not but be aware that young women of a spare habit soon grow corkscrew visaged; that if not pretty you must be gay and charming; that if you are dowerless, cross, and scraggy, your chances will be slight as an angler. What if she were never to land any fish at all? What if, when King and Queen were dead, she should still have to go grimacing on from generation to generation, poor, neglected, despised, ill, blind, deaf, a butt for saucy maids of honour?

'"No more on glass,"' she murmured, '"shall diamond grave my name,
And rhymes mispelt record a lover's flame;
Nor shall side-boxes watch my glancing eyes,
And as they catch my look in rows arise
With humble bows!"'

So sang the defunct Mr. Gay—prophetically, perhaps, of the ambitious but bungling Mrs. Belfield.

Pamela was so eaten up by dulness and indecision —so worn by futile attempts to peep under the veil— that she almost resolved to take to good works. But then there again cropped up the odious subject of pelf. When you are poor who cares for your exiguous good works? Moreover, she was too young as yet to sit in the Chapel Royal with the frizzled frumps in towers of fine lace. 'Twould be an admission of defeat.

When she had money—which, alack! was not often—she went her restless rounds to the Indian toy-shops—to the auctions, to buy useless china, cabinets, or rich brocades; and even then was wretched, for Gervas was a glum comrade, with no sympathy for vanities; and, till she was actually married, 'twas etiquette for less-favoured beaux— even though they professed no serious intentions—to hold aloof.

She was dissatisfied also with regard to her sister. Though hitherto I have spared my own feelings as well as yours, by suggesting hints rather than declaring facts as to the proceedings of an Honourable Miss, it may be well to make no more bones about it, but confess, with a great gulp, that Mrs. Belfield had taken a considerable amount of trouble to achieve the undoing of Mrs. Philpot.

She and Madam Cibber and Madam Mapp—a trinity of angels—had put their wicked heads together to some effect; and if Sir Charles had not

appeared, like a phantom, upon London Bridge one night, and cried 'Forbear!' it is likely that feminine spleen would have been gratified. But now a possibility reared up its head of the naughty damsel appearing in the character of Phœnix.

Barbara had passed through a fiery furnace with an amount of singeing which time would doubtless put right again. Crump, goaded by curbed desire, and a little at the last by policy, had plumped forth his hand, and taken the wounded one on her own terms.

For some reason of his own, he had long shirked the wedding-ring, but had made up his mind at last, owing possibly to the revived interest of the Prime Minister in his little Whig. Sir Robert was partial to his faithful secretary. For the sake of both wife and husband, therefore, it was probable he would push the fortunes of the Crumps. They would grow rich and influential. It was publicly announced that Bab was to reap new laurels by-and-by on the boards. How harrowing to consider that, after so much scheming, Mrs. Belfield's benevolent intentions should be foiled!

At this juncture occurred something that roused the bedchamber-woman from apathetic grumbling to startled alarm—that awoke both Queen and Minister from their uneasy dozing. All kinds of rumours and secret bits of information as to the doings of the Dawleyites found their way from time to time into Sir Robert's ear, whereat he only smiled.

Who so great an adept as Walpole at spreading dissension in a party?

'Have I not kept the Jacobites quarrelling for years?' he repeated, in answer to the remonstrances of anxious Ranulph. 'Let be! when the incongruous elements become adhesive, then we will press our heel on them. At present the fools are innocently occupied; not worth considering. Let St. John sip his syllabub upon his haycocks; let Pulteney declaim and Chesterfield discourse! That idiot Forfar, too—squandering his energy and horseflesh!'

Sir Robert was certainly incorrigible; had clean forgotten that trip to Barbadoes that so nearly was his lot. What mattered it that mysterious travellers were constantly riding to the Bear, and clattering to Dawley—riding post-haste over the marshes? The real danger was not from these wind-bags, the Minister was convinced, but from the infatuated George himself, who was lingering still in Germany.

Sir Robert had learned from St. John's servants, who were his pensioners, that the bejewelled conspirators were constantly discussing something in the middle of the hayfield, though, thanks to Bolingbroke's cleverly arranged place of *rendezvous*, 'twas impossible to eavesdrop. 'Twas vain to crawl along the hedgerow. Nothing might be heard; but something might be gathered from gesture. They bickered and argued hotly; shook their heads; in

heat of discussion laid hands on swords. Was not Sir Robert right to despise plotters whose opinions were thus divided?

My Lord Forfar lay doggedly upon his back, refusing to reply to Pulteney; Chesterfield took snuff, which he never did save in moments of extreme annoyance. As to Cincinnatus himself, he got up and walked about, gesticulating wildly, shaking his long curls and tearing his ruffles in chagrin, then squatting down white-hot.

Curious eyes, peering through the hedge, could mark that Lord Forfar's mind was mulishly made up upon some point, and that the protests of the rest were vain. At length, with evident reluctance, they gave way, as warm, eager men always do to stubborn obstinacy. As the group left the field, and moved along the lane towards the house, a listener heard Pulteney say:

'Well—if you will have it so, but I protest;' to which the others added, with sullen looks at Forfar, 'And I,' 'And I.'

Something was going to take place, then; it mattered little what. The King should return; he must. He should be implored once more, and then they might do their worst. Thus spake Sir Robert from Ranulph's easy seat in the apartment by the Queen's privy stair; and Charlotte hearkened from her little den hard by. Not that she purposely played the listener. She was sitting there, with hands before

her, considering what her next step in life should be. Her restless spirit was growing weary of hairdressing, and she longed to exhibit again the Queen of Sheba, and Alexander the Great, and pretty Hero and Leander.

Though tolerably free, regular hours were irksome to Sir Charles; and she reflected that since Mr. Medlicote was so partial to his quiet perukier, he might be cajoled into advancing a sum for the starting of a new puppet-motion. 'Twould be delightful to go roving again in the sweet fields! Not to know or care where the head was to be laid; to listen to the jocund birds; pluck the wild flowers; chase the butterflies; mark down the beetles to their lairs; laugh at the silly ants and bees—Marthas of the insect world.

Though absent-minded, Charlotte could not but hear what the two men were saying in the adjoining room.

'An ungovernable spirit,' Ranulph was declaring with concern, 'is showing itself all over the kingdom. Licentious, seditious rioting; tumults and disorders of all sorts.'

'Mere blood-letting to cool fever,' calmly rejoined Sir Robert. 'We stopped their foolish bawling for a moment by abandoning Excise. Then it was gin; now it is corn; next it may be paper or feathers.'

''Tis the Dawley junta that's at the bottom of it all,' emphatically asserted Ranulph. 'You may pre-

tend that it is mere nightmare. I tell you that only yesterday, in Spitalfields, there was a serious disturbance.'

'Serious fiddlestick!' laughed Walpole. 'Some Irish weavers were working at a lower rate than English journeymen.'

'The mob began by railing at Irishmen, no doubt,' assented Ranulph. 'In four hours they took to cursing of Germans—reviled the King, the Queen, and you, and huzzaed for James III.'

Sir Robert looked pensive. If that were so, something must be done. 'Twould never do to have shouts for the Pretender in Spitalfields. And yet 'twas mere foolishness; an empty cry bellowed to annoy the Government.

Though he seemed to make light of the matter, Walpole thought more of it than he pretended, for next day the soldiery were called out, and there was bloodshed. A band of smugglers charged across London Bridge, and penetrated as far as Lincoln's Inn; and officers in command of battalions reported them as well armed and mounted, and so numerous withal as to deserve the gravest attention.

A few days later there was an uproar under the sacred roof of Westminster Hall itself. The courts were sitting, the counsel pleading, the Hall full of lawyers and clients, when on a sudden there was a loud report, a yell for James III., and a simoom of dust. Judges and lawyers jumped helter-skelter over

one another's backs in panic, losing gowns and periwigs. Some one shrieked that the Pretender was at St. James's—that the Royal Family of the House of Hanover had fled. Seditious handbills flew about somehow in the air. None could say who was guilty of the outrage.

Clearly this would never do. That the legal profession should have been guilty of such an exhibition of alarm and cowardice at the mere mention of James III., and the explosion of a few pennyworths of gunpowder, looked ill for the stability of the Guelphs. Some notice would have to be taken of the affair, for 'twas an insult to King and Queen and to the majesty of the law.

Whispers passed from mouth to mouth to the effect that 'twas no lunatic freak, but a serious attempt, which had miscarried; for in Southwark and about Rotherhithe and Wapping there were some who openly complained that they had never seen the signal. There was an uneasy movement, too, of the troops in Hyde Park which required explanation.

The Queen, in the prolonged absence of the Sovereign, was genuinely terrified. So perturbed was she that Sir Robert entreated Mrs. Belfield to soothe her Majesty while he went below to Mr. Medlicote's to consider what should be done; not that Pamela was in a soothing mood, being exasperated almost beyond bearing. Was this tomfoolery

the only outcome of all the plotting and riding and muttering? Verily the wig-block was in the right, and she was wrong. Scales had dropped from her eyes, and she reproached herself with having pinned her faith upon the fluttering skirt of a dreamer. Unpractical, vapouring fellow! The ducal coronet was but a paper crown—worse, a foolscap! The Dawleyites, for all their blustering and the shrieking of the *Craftsman*, were men of straw—Lord Forfar an impudent impostor. But, thank goodness! there was yet time for repentance, since the knot was not tied. Out on the braggart! he should be sent packing without more demur.

The virulence of Pamela against her betrothed astonished Caroline. The bedchamber-woman knew that the man to whom she gave herself was a Jacobite—why then this tornado of indignation? Well, well! the Queen would be lenient to the repentant sinner. Even a converted bedchamber-woman was worth a little civility in such ticklish times. So her Majesty kissed Mrs. Belfield, and, with words of comfort, was good enough to forgive the past.

Pamela was not the only one who suspected that Gervas's finger had been in this pie. 'Twas he who was always careering on horseback in an unlooped hat. Twas he who had insisted on doing something, despite the protests of his colleagues. Sir Robert, as, forgetful of gout-twinges, he paced Mr. Medlicote's apartment, with hands behind his back, agreed

with Ranulph that steps must be taken to stop these scandals. 'Twould not be fitting to call at Dawley and demand explanations. Why not make a raid upon the Bear, and seize Lord Forfar's papers?

'Not a good suggestion,' objected Ranulph, 'for the boys of merry Southwark would look on such a proceeding as a malignant precedent—forerunner of a raid upon the Holy Mint or Sacred Montagu Close; and yet something must be done, and speedily, to avoid yet greater complications.'

Seize Lord Forfar's papers! Charlotte heard from her modest unconsidered nook, and, shaken from a day-dream, hearkened.

No. The lawless smugglers might ride to Lincoln's Inn and butcher the soldiery; but to send the latter to retaliate in Southwark was quite out of the question. What! spur the slumbering dragon? If, goaded to action, the Mint and the purlieus of the Borough were to belch forth their enraged hordes upon the City, who might foretell the consequences?

Sir Robert declined, on his favourite principle of Cæsar or nothing, to consult the other Ministers. Whatever was to be done, he and he alone would have the credit of it. And yet an ingenious solution of the difficulty was badly wanted. Crump! Where was Honest Jack? Babes and sucklings have been known to prate wisdom. He was wont to be ingenious; his fingers might unknot the tangle.

Honest Jack was accordingly called in. He was

looking well and handsome, was exceedingly well-dressed—improved in many ways by matrimony. And yet a second glance showed marks of dissipation about the corners of the eyes and mouth which should not have been visible in one so newly mated.

Honest Jack looked down, smiled at Sir Robert, nodded with a show of familiarity to the Vice-Chamberlain, stared at the ceiling with eyes too far apart.

Yes, if his humble opinion was asked, he should say that my Lord Forfar was at the bottom of this baby's effort. Sir Robert would doubtless remember that on another and less puerile occasion, Sir Robert had been saved from my lord's wiles by the dear and much-loved wife of him, Jack Crump. Lord Forfar's mental resources had no doubt been completely drained on that occasion, since the latest effort was so childish. Nevertheless, he, Jack Crump, was of opinion that more than the explosion of a pop-gun had been intended; and that Lord Forfar was fully cognizant of all the details. Ergo, it would be vastly well to seize Lord Forfar's papers.

'That leads us no further on the road,' replied Ranulph impatiently, for he resented the secretary's familiar ways. 'Take his papers by all means; but how?'

'I am well known at the Bear,' responded Honest

Jack. (He certainly was less humble than before his marriage.) 'Did I not there receive my darling wife? Depend on't the landlord is no plotter; 'twould not be worth his while to mix in politics. I'll take my darling there as if to revisit old haunts, and 'twill be strange if I cannot penetrate into my Lord Forfar's chamber.'

Admirable! Honest Jack was a pearl of price. He should do as he suggested, and should choose his time; but he must be quick about it, or might arrive too late.

He always did his best in a modest station, did Honest Jack. There was a little office just vacant —a small matter of Government patronage worth a few hundred pounds a year—should he prove successful, and arrive with valuable documents—might he? 'Oh! a thousand thanks!' And Honest Jack bustled off to Kensington to engage his dear spouse for a sentimental pilgrimage; while Charlotte, in her unconsidered nook, sat open-mouthed.

Charlotte had shown, on various occasions, that save in the direction wherein her brain was warped she could cope with emergencies. She sat aghast, round-eyed. Bab was to be used as a cat's-paw for the betrayal of the man she loved. She must be put upon her guard. For her sake Lord Forfar must be premonished. How lucky that the duties of the perukier were slight, and that she had time

for wandering! What if Gervas were away? Oh, agony!

Sir Charles jumped up and seized his hat, and, gliding out by the side-postern, pattered to London Bridge. The Fates were kind. Gervas was sitting on his balcony, more glum than ever; angry with the world; hating earth and sky; most indignant of all against himself on account of the Westminster fiasco.

Should Charlotte beckon to him? No. His brown study was of the deepest. Besides, spies might be watching who would carry tidings. Charlotte and Southwark were old allies, fast friends. She would walk boldly into the Bear as she had often done, and creep privily up into his chamber.

'Twas some time ere Gervas recognised the youth who diffidently knocked and entered.

'Charlotte Charke!' he said, at last, with a deep sigh, for the sight of Cibber's daughter recalled old memories.

'Charlotte Charke,' the latter echoed gaily, 'better known in these quarters as "Sir Charles." Your neighbour not long since, although you wist it not.'

'My neighbour?' repeated Lord Forfar wearily.

'From the side-window in the passage yonder, you can see ours, just by the tower of St. Saviour's, in the Close. We dwelt there—ah me!—for many trying weeks, grievously in want of bread, while you,

hard by, could eat and drink your fill. But that is over now. I wanted several times to come to you, but she would never let me.'

'She! Who?'

'Barbara Philpot—now Barbara Crump, alack!'

'Barbara!' cried Gervas, his interest awakened. 'I knew she was somewhere near—dwelling with—a man!'

'I was that man!'

'You?' Gervas said, troubled. 'You? Starving—close by—and she——'

Charlotte marvelled at the emotion of Lord Forfar.

'You wist it not,' she said gently, 'or I know you would have assisted us. Your deeds of kindness to the poor prisoners are in all mouths.'

'Not so. I knew of it, and yet was misinformed.' Then, with sudden horror in his eyes, Lord Forfar rose and smote the table. ''Twas *she* who said it, and I chid her. But she could not have known!'

Charlotte's curiosity was stirred in turn, and she echoed, mimicking:

'She! Who?'

'Her sister—Pamela,' Gervas murmured with reluctance.

Then was the ire kindled of Sir Charles.

'Oh false! false! She knew 'twas I was dwelling with her sister, and deceived you purposely. She and Madam Cibber, the envious savage, and Crump

—alas! now husband. What will come of it?—oh, what will come of it? Proud, much-suffering Barbara, I doubt your cup's not full!' and Charlotte, racked by one of those torrents of despair that recalled to Gervas a day so long ago in the Richmond toy-shop, when first he beheld the crazy creature, flung herself headlong on the floor.

Did she speak truth? Did Pamela, malice perpense, coin the tale about the man to disgust her betrothed and prevent her sister's rescue from starvation? He had chid her at the time as unsisterly, if even the tale were true. What could her object be? Surely not jealousy? Such men as Gervas have nothing but contempt for Othellos, male or female. Mere spite? And this was the woman whom he was to swear to cherish and to love? Covering his face with both hands, Lord Forfar grieved in silence. Why were his lines cast in such unpleasant places? What a series of subjects for regret were his! A Cause that had ruined his estate and was now drifting to sure shipwreck. A wife who—well, it was not safe to think of her. And then that Westminster fiasco. As to that last matter, he had learned a lesson. He had been wrong, most wrong, in forcing an attempted rise contrary to the opinions of his colleagues; for the future he would be less obstinate. He was sick of it all—even of the Holy Cause. As he sat pondering in deep dejection, he, like Barbara, called on the far-off Pilgrim. Though

his heart was no longer with it, he would not desert the flag. If his colleagues, when the King returned, should resolve on a final effort, he would fight with them side by side; and if Fate had any mercy, some bullet would find a billet in the disappointed patriot's breast.

By-and-by his discontent found words, and wandering snatches of disconnected talk recalled patiently waiting Charlotte to the object of her visit. Sitting on the arm of his chair, she briefly related what by accident she had overheard, while the dark eyes of Gervas were fixed on hers inquiringly.

'If Charlotte was in the service of the Hanoverian Vice-Chamberlain, why should she interest herself in a suspected traitor?' he dubiously inquired.

'For Bab's sake,' blabbed Sir Charles, and then could have bitten out his tongue for the imprudent admission.

Gervas's eyebrows rose higher. If Mrs. Philpot, when in extremity, had declined to allow an appeal to be made to him, though he dwelt but a stone's-throw off, 'twas odd she should authorize an ambassage when his neck appeared in peril.

'She did not authorize my visit,' stammered Charlotte, growing confused; 'indeed, she knows nothing of it.'

'And her husband and she, you say, are coming here to pry into my scrutoire?'

'Have faith and believe me,' pleaded Charlotte.

'For reasons I cannot give, both she and I are interested in your fate. Conceal your papers, if you have any, and beware of Mr. Crump.'

The more Lord Forfar examined it, the less could he decipher the riddle. Was it a trap? No. Smarting under the heavy blow of Pamela's now too evident wickedness, he passed in review his varying opinions as to Barbara. Strongly prejudiced against her, he had been compelled more than once to admit himself wrong in his conclusions. She was wild and reckless and giddy, no doubt; but so at first are many excellent girls who, like men, have wild oats to sow. Fearless and true to those she loved—such was the verdict given by experience. He was too innately a gentleman to bear malice over the kidnapping attempt. 'Twas like a game of chess in which, by superior wit, he had been worsted. Indeed, he had envied Bluestring for having so staunch an ally. And then, as he reflected, conscience upbraided him for conduct he now saw to be Jesuitical. He had stooped to grope and worm, and remembered tart sayings of blunt Barbara's on the use of dirty weapons. This was no trap. He had heard much from time to time—as all London had—as to the doings of Charlotte Charke. One of the strangest things about her was her incorruptible honesty in the face of sore temptation. Much as old Colley hated his crackbrained child, he was ever fain to confess that she was always the cheated, never the cheater. And yet—

what possible motive could these two women have—but what was to be gained by such bootless marvel? Looking into the depths of Charlotte's earnest dog-like eyes, Gervas decided to trust her.

'So they are coming to search my scrutoire?' he said, sadly smiling. 'What next? Shall I prepare me for a siege?'

'Better let Crump search and find nothing,' suggested Charlotte, 'than resist and so give colour to suggestions of concealment.'

There was worldly wisdom in that.

'If you will put faith in me,' Charlotte went on, with timid hesitation, 'my lodging will be a safe depository. I will not inquire what 'tis you leave with me; so shall we both be satisfied.'

It was rash, and yet it was not. There were documents which might not be destroyed. Bonds in King James's name—sundry lists of great importance. Was it fair to endanger this crazy creature by so hazardous a deposit? As she had said, she of all on earth would be last suspected of political intrigue. And she need never know the contents of the packet. If an unsuccessful attempt were made upon the Bear, why should not another be tried at Dawley later on—if not by force, by stratagem? For many reasons it would be best to permit an abortive search, and pretend never to have known of it. It might be useful to be proved innocent. Lord Forfar made up his mind, and drawing from

a secret place a parcel, handed it without a word to Sir Charles, who, with a flush of pleasure, concealed it in an inner pocket. How pleased would Barbara be when she told her what she had done! With jaunty step, brimful of importance, humming an air from the 'Beggar's Opera,' Sir Charles wended his way westward, as blythe and proud as if the bearer of Hero and the Queen of Sheba, instead of a bundle of papers; while Gervas returned to his chequered pondering; grieved at one time to the quick at certain intelligence of Pamela's treachery; strangely light-hearted at another to think how he had wronged Barbara. A singular incomprehensible woman. Consider her conduct how he would, the stubborn fact remained that for some reason of her own she had danced fandangoes with demireps and blacklegs. That was bad. But the story about the man was a malicious lie—the worst form of lie, since 'twas so near the truth. Oh, wicked, venomous serpent Pamela! Strange, fascinating, surprising Barbara! The more he thought of it all, the less comprehensible did it appear. 'For Bab's sake,' Charlotte had blurted out. Why for Bab's sake? Now that she was decorously married, clothed, and in her right mind again, there could be no harm in seeing her once more; in endeavouring to fathom the mystery. But Crump—snake in the grass! Could she really be happy with such a man? Would he himself, knowing what he knew, ever taste a

moment of happiness with Mrs. Belfield? Never, never! Perhaps Barbara would never learn the shady proceedings of her husband. How such learning would shock her blunt but generous nature! Sure ignorance is oftenest bliss, and learning a snare. How many upright wives are joined to base husbands, yet never know it! Do we not hear of virtuous spouses who never suspect their husbands' guilt till they behold them in the dock? Lord Forfar sent up a fervent prayer for Barbara's happiness, and sighed. For him there never could be happiness. Dreaming idler, to crave after the unattainable on earth! Though his mind was troubled and full of harassing cares, the heart of glum Gervas felt lighter somehow.

CHAPTER V.

'A NEW LIFE.'

WHEN in due course the elastic stride of Sir Charles brought him to Kensington, and he unfolded his budget, the beautiful face of Barbara was a picture of dismay.

How different was the ancient from the present Barbara! Which was the mask, and which the real face? She was well enough in health, though, of course, so severe an ordeal as that she had undergone at Southwark must needs leave a lasting imprint. The scornful, domineering, saucy Mrs. Finelady was dead; the stormy loveliness of Queen Beelzebub had faded. The fair creature whose somewhat thin but finely-proportioned figure was so piquantly set off by a well-fitting dress of simple chintz, was sedate and self-contained and demure, still and reserved, with an interesting tinge of mournfulness.

Sir Robert, who frequently rode hitherward when

business permitted (remorseful, maybe, for unintentional neglect), was testy thereanent, and chucking her under the chin, bade his little Whig be merry as of yore. But that might never be. Doth he who hath borne the rack ever forget the strain? The discipline of the harsh world in which we find ourselves is doubtless salutary; but the scars of the lash may never be effaced. After bending painfully under the yoke we may rise erect again, as Barbara had done, and be in some sort our old selves once more; but the change is there, to be detected by those only who know us best. Turbulent and self-sufficient, Bab had suffered from so overwhelming a sense of helplessness and degradation as she sat on the bed in the spunging-house staring through the bars on vacancy—as she slowly starved in the garret by St. Saviour's—that she wondered still why her hair was not white, why she had not laid her down and died long before the supreme moment when she stood on the river-steps calling on the Pilgrim.

The ordeal over, people had been kind—kinder than she deserved, Bab had murmured in a newborn meekness that sat oddly on her, and she reproached herself for lack of gratitude. If a pigmy mortal chooses to run amuck against public opinion, should he not be smitten? Aye; but punishment is meted out sometimes with too liberal a hand. However, old friends had rallied round again, and 'twould be well to forget the episode of blackness except for

the lessons it conveyed of patience and humility. Since 'twas her fate to marry Crump, she married him, and registered a vow to be a true and faithful spouse.

But what was this tale of Charlotte's? What fiend had caused Bab to disclose a precious secret even to Sir Charles? The degrading secret that should have been guarded with such jealous care! Well-meaning but crazy wastrel! Bab knew that she would cut out her tongue, hew off a hand, rather than injure her dear patroness; and yet what terrible broths are brewed with the best and most loyal intentions! She had actually told Lord Forfar that she, Bab, was specially interested in him!

The blood flushed to the roots of Barbara's hair as she reflected on it. Her ears tingled in a manner which showed that the lesson of humility was far from thoroughly learned. Not but what it was a becoming pride that stirred her blood; for was she not resolved in the future to be respectable, and it certainly is not respectable to let one man know you like him when bound in wedlock to another.

What would Lord Forfar think—what conjecture? She who had always so unaccountably yearned for his esteem, was pained and shocked; and wistful Charlotte flung herself on the floor in her impulsive way and wept, seeing she had acted wrongly. And yet, why wrongly? Barbara would not wish him to be betrayed, and by her own husband? He must be

saved somehow, and the crazy girl could think of no better method than the one pursued. Alack! alack! It was the evil-eye. Nothing that Charlotte could attempt or do could ever prosper. Had she not said so often?

Bab was compelled to put aside her own painful thoughts in order to soothe the distress of Charlotte. On the whole, perhaps Sir Charles had not acted wrongly. 'Twere better for the peace of Madam Crump to forget the existence of her sister's betrothed as much as might be; and yet what signified her peace, if by its sacrifice she could be of service to him?

The idea of her own lord enacting Judas opened a grisly vista which she shrank from investigating. Charlotte had done quite right; but, forewarned, Bab's demeanour in the future must, by circumspection, give the lie to any feeling of special interest. For her own sake and her husband's. Then a lump throbbed into her throat, and a pang tightened her breast, which showed yet further how badly the lessons had been learned. What mattered her behaviour? Circumspection, indeed! 'Twas really laughable, for Gervas was supremely indifferent to her and her concerns. 'Twas like the building of earthworks for defence against spiked guns! When she had been a reigning toast, a worshipped Diva—when a mark for the slings of scorn, a complete failure—had not Gervas been equally indifferent?

Was not everyone indifferent? Who cared what she did, or what befell? No one, not even herself. A spasm of the old pain pinched her heart. Nobody really cared for her who had so pined for affection—not even Jack, her husband.

'Twas sad but true. Not all at once did the conviction break upon her, but when it did she marvelled. Jack's conduct was inexplicable. For years had he not hung about her skirts, hot and cold by turns? Had he not shown himself in various phases of longing? had he not made attempts of all sorts to storm the garrison—cajoling, threatening, imploring? Had he not held back and hesitated, and then advanced again, as though pushed on by irresistible force to something which his judgment contemned? What did he mean by it? If he did not love her, why pursue? If he once loved her, why had the ardour cooled so suddenly? No doubt with some ill-regulated natures possession brings satiety. But the hot iron had grown cold with amazing swiftness. There must be something behind.

In vain Bab wondered what. For the first quarter of the honeymoon Jack had been all warmth; had clasped to him his wife with fervid embraces, murmuring that she was his own now, his very own. Then, when now and again she glanced at him there was a peculiar expression in his glassy eyes, that seemed to say—if such a notion were not pre-

posterous—that she had done her lord some injury. She had concealed nothing from him. He knew of the hurly-burly in Golden Square, of all the escapades. What could the poison be that was rankling in his mind? What offence had she committed? It was not she who had forced him into marriage. Contrariwise, she had been completely passive, a drifting log, murmuring, 'What must be, must.' Why, then, that curious expression as of injury? That he was not a good man she had known long ago. That he was profoundly unscrupulous dawned by degrees on her. That he was rapacious, insolent when not afraid, mean to parsimony, careless of the methods whereby his desires were gratified, came upon her slowly; and on each fresh discovery she bent her head and murmured:

'It serves me right, for giving myself to one when my heart belongs to another.'

But she taxed herself in vain as to an injury. True, when he had urged her to solicit money favours from Sir Robert, she had proudly declined, replying curtly that she begged of no man. If her husband chose to squander his substance at faro, he must put up with the results. 'Twas not for her to reproach him after what she had done herself; but she would have him to remember that she had sternly borne the consequences, even to starvation-point, and, if need were, would do so again. He was rude sometimes, but that was nothing new; and

said cruel things which stung Barbara now and then out of her attitude of resignation, for they were glozed with an impertinent civility.

'Your head and heart are equally bad!' she remarked, one day at breakfast, to end an unpleasant discussion. To which he replied, with an ugly smile, while handing his chocolate-cup to be replenished:

'I never piqued myself upon my head. My heart being in your possession, you must be answerable for it.'

'You can have no conscience to ask me to do such things,' she retorted. To which he returned:

'If yours and mine were hung on a hedge to dry, who would think 'em worth stealing?'

Such quips were not conducive to domestic harmony, and Bab found it no easy matter to keep up the part of Patient Griselda. And yet she succeeded better than folks would have supposed, had they known all. In old days she would have thrown things at the head of such a husband, and proclaimed his misdemeanours on the housetop, for 'twas exasperating to a loyal nature to see how doublefaced he was, to mark how soon, and with what contemptuous carelessness he showed his real self to her. Her blood boiled to hear his scoffing remarks about the patron to whom he owed all, and then to observe his cringing ways if Sir Robert rode up to the door.

She ought to have known by this time, you will say, that 'tis one of the peculiarities of this our globe for the burthen to be too heavy for the shoulders. There were moments when, with all her studied self-control, Bab was unable to keep silence, and she wondered whether, as she bit her lips and clenched her hands under the table, it would be possible to go on enduring, or whether, after all, the river must be her bed.

The Duchess of Queensberry, displeased with Society in general, had gone back again to the country, and shone but rarely in town. Countenanced again by the reigning Minister, Madam Crump found herself once more surrounded by persons of quality whose range of vision had for a period grown dim; but these were only acquaintances. Barbara's old friend Wilks died about this time. Lord Byron, true to his character, eloped one day to Ireland with Madam Cibber, thereby causing much relief to Theophilus, considerable clatter in modest circles, and worry at the theatre; for the future Diva Madam Pritchard was still declaiming in Fielding's booth, and there was a grievous dearth of heroines.

Urged by reviving curiosity, Lord Forfar was true to his resolve, and called on Madam Crump. But though she received him civilly, he obtained such scant encouragement as further whetted his interest. For obvious reasons the Honourable Pamela and her

sister kept apart. The Kensington *ménage* was not a gay one, and Crump, finding his nest extremely uncomfortable, absented himself more and more. To Sir Robert, who noticed this with regret, Bab answered sadly:

'Yes; unmolested separation is the claim that holds us together. Sure there's no more honourable couple in town; for we've two purses, two tables, and two ways; and when we do meet 'tis as surprising a chance as two lawyers meeting in Paradise!'

'Little Whig! little Whig!' Sir Robert cried, shaking a finger, 'this must be changed! He must be plaguy nice to neglect so sweet a spouse. But I'm too old and seared a sinner to interfere 'twixt a wife and husband. What's to be done, Bab? what's to be done? Flowers of genius are not made for household cares. You must go back and delight us on the stage. Madam Cibber's flitting is opportune.'

How rash are we so glibly and frequently to vow that we never will do such a thing again! Since our attitude and that of those about is ever changing, he is the wisest who never vows at all. With what emphasis had Bab determined that she never would act again—that the temple of Thalia and Melpomene was a tinselled magazine piled high with the lower passions. Then she did not know that a time would come when it would be an absolute necessity to occupy her mind. The art that demands your

heart's blood! Sure she had no heart, for 'twas lost and tossed away by him to whom she'd given it. With a certain cynical satisfaction she told herself that she was armed now against the evil influences of the stage. She had suffered too much to be vain or selfish any more, to nourish grudging hate or envy or spite, or any other of the attributes that distinguish many actors and actresses. 'Twas with some surprise that she found her instinctive reluctance to have vanished. During the long hours of solitude when, Honest Jack being happily away, it was necessary to find some occupation, she idly took up her Congreve, her Otway, and her Rowe, and smiled to think how badly she had played their heroines. Musing, she realized that Wilks was right, and grieved that he should have gone ere his pupil could admit it. The art that claims your heart's blood! Yes; to think of the mouthing, strutting, vainglorious, empty-pated minxes who, trading on a scrap of beauty, pretend to portray the passions, when they have themselves felt nothing save an intoxicating conviction of their own importance! Bab felt very humble when she remembered her many talks with Wilks, of how positive she had been; of what nonsense she had been guilty in her ignorance; how she had deserved whipping instead of plaudits. By the light of her own hard experience she understood the sorrows of Monimia now, of Alicia, of Jane Shore, and all the others she had

murdered; and a strong desire took possession of her soul to appear for a brief while again, to shame those who had called her divine when she was only a prating doll; to show that she could be an artist —a real one; that the sacred fire was there, though it had long smouldered, but that, fanned by trouble, it could burst into a flame, pure and white and dazzling. Occupied by study, Barbara resumed in outward appearance much of her old self; could be animated, even saucy, when sly Sir Robert combated her views, swearing that black was white in order to spur her energies.

'You dear old tease!' she said, with a kiss on each of his fat cheeks. 'You are the best and kindest of men, though Bolingbroke yearns to hang you; and you may tell the patentees, if you like, that I will appear next season and astonish them;' which message being duly conveyed, there was joy and hope in Drury.

On this subject Honest Jack refrained from quips; first, because he knew better than to thwart his patron; secondly, because it broke on him ere long that he had espoused a golden goose, who, with training, might lay precious eggs. The look of injury waned from out his eyes, and he even attempted to be polite; for, truth to tell, Fortune had been crusty of late to Mr. Crump. His losings at cards had been considerable; he had vainly squandered much on lotteries; and was not unfre-

quently distressed by the sense of an empty pocket.

Fleeing from some unpleasant haunting thought, he had become assiduous in his worship of King Hoyle, with the usual result.

'Twas urged by some such itching that when called into conclave in the rooms of Mr. Medlicote, he had made terms instead of obeying quietly; and 'tis painful to have to tell that in that hope he had been baulked; for, no success, no sinecure. He had, as proposed, gone to the Bear, and artfully insinuated himself into Lord Forfar's chamber, to find—nothing! Nothing, that is, that could be coined into yellow guineas. This untoward circumstance had much perplexed him, for Mr. Crump, if deficient in book-lore, was no ninny, and knowing what he knew of my Lord Forfar, it was strange that no compromising document should have rewarded a surreptitious search. Could anyone have warned him? Who?

Crump, by worming here and there, had gained some inkling of a plot afoot that had absurdly miscarried, and was convinced that Gervas was at the bottom of it. Was it not grievous, then, to be unable to lay a hand upon that noble's privy papers; to be flouted by your own wife when you try to use her as a decoy? For this was the point which had stung Bab from apathy. He told her, airily, that he would take her to the Bear, just as Charlotte had predicted; and, being taxed with his intentions, put

artifice aside, and endeavoured to coerce his spouse. She would be good enough, he informed her, to obey his will, or 'twould be the worse for madam.

She was to encourage Lord Forfar—lure him into confidences, and then faithfully report them to her lord. To a pretty woman, is not all possible if she has a mind to it? And she dared peremptorily to decline! Then, when my lord absolutely arrived of his own accord, his mouth wide open for the bait, she presumed to disobey instructions, to dismiss him coldly; when, only a few weeks before, she had promised to honour and obey. Oh, queen of minxes! But Bab's will had, in this first serious tussle, proved stronger than her husband's, and, grumble as he would, she had distinctly refused to obey. Therefore he punished her with such rudeness and neglect as he dared. Bruises or marks of blows might come under the cognizance of Sir Robert.

Since he had failed signally in his laudable endeavours to make of his wife a decoy for the earning of money from the Government, 'twas well she should return to the boards, and by other means help to keep the pot a-boiling. His wife in seclusion, too, did not flatter him by winning admiration. How often had he said, when the pit rose at her, that the much-admired Diva should be his. A glittering doll in a shop-window causeth the noses of the bystanders to flatten, the eyes of envy to dilate; the same doll locked in a box is a poor unin-

teresting object. Hence, Mr. Crump was all in favour of Bab's return to Drury, and urged the matter with such warmth that, had not sorrow changed her, she certainly would have promptly declined.

As it is the task of Fortune to be constantly turning a wheel, whereon are perched all mortals, it stands to reason that while some go up, others must be going down. The affairs of the Honourable Pamela were not looking rosy. Gervas in a duke's coronet, endowed by a grateful master with a princely fortune, could, for reasons not unconnected with policy, be endured. But Gervas, an impoverished Scotch peer and a laughing-stock, was out of the question. Ungilded worth and sterling excellence were to Mrs. Belfield as the new metal recently invented by Mr. Pinchbeck. Gervas must be sent packing; of that there could no longer be the smallest shadow of a doubt. There is nothing so absurd as an unsuccessful patriot, or an unsuccessful anything else for that matter.

My Lord Belvedere exercised his caustic humour at his child's expense, and she writhed under his sarcasms.

'By-and-by, when I reach England,' writ the fond parent, 'I shall build me an house such as shall suit my dignity; small, but elegant, in a polite quarter, with no room for Madam Pretender's ladies of honour or Jacobite spawn.'

Was Pamela one to weep over a betrothed's delinquencies, to mourn over his shortcomings? No, indeed. She put on her new sacque of brocaded lustring—a ruby ground, with raised floss stripes—and smiled sweetly on Mr. Medlicote. If she were to break with the Scotch lord immediately after the explosion of the popgun, 'twould be too barefaced, and the world would titter.

No. It behoved an artful damsel to take up the other bowstring gently, and gradually put down the first. All things should be done by a bedchamber-woman decently and in order. As to enduring her papa's taunts if he were to arrive and find her loverless, that was not possible. By good luck she had kept on the other. At one-and-twenty 'tis as easy—as far as heart-pain is concerned—to change lovers as clothes, to such as understand the business.

All things considered, it might become necessary, after all, to bring Medlicote to the point, even without a coronet. He was wealthy and influential.

Should papa earn that earldom, 'twould be the rich Lady Pamela Medlicote. Not so very bad as a *pis aller*, though, of course, not to be compared to Her Grace the Duchess of Forfar.

Once married to Ranulph, if such were Fate's decree, she would change her tactics. When guided only by interest, 'tis so easy to decide what is best. Already had she not amazed her Royal mistress by a gush of Guelfic loyalty? 'Twould be one of the

privileges of Mr. Medlicote's better-half to keep her husband awake o' nights, read him fearsome curtain-lectures till, maddened by want of sleep, he would abandon all that independent rubbish about serving his friend in the Lower House, and beg a peerage on his knees in reward for services.

Yes. But first it would be necessary to shake off Gervas, who was a burr. Quixotic buckramed fellow! He had some frumpish notion in his head that a promise given was for aye; that having promised to take a damsel, he was bound to cleave although he hated her. Was ever such unmodish folly? In vain did she make herself as odious to him as possible—a not uncongenial task. When Ranulph was not by, she would, in a light manner, air such sentiments as paled Gervas's cheek, and darkened his brow.

The rupture, of course, must come from her; but the ground must be so skilfully prepared that he would hail his *congé* as release. Useless energy, had she been aware of it; for did he not already loathe her? She spoke of Lord Belvedere's proximate return as a trial, observing that parents were ever nuisances.

'Those only,' she observed, 'do I call civil, who make a decent will and go off quickly, without long sickness to put one to charges.'

She abused Barbara as an abandoned woman, which, knowing what he knew, so raised the Scotch-

man's ire that she felt a qualm, and muttered inwardly, 'What's this? If he were to take to her, I'd die of it. Yet, no; he is too prim—and she returning to the stage, and blown upon. No fear!' But all the same the rupture must be brought about at once—by her; for, ignorant of what the future might have in store, Barbara must never have a chance of saying that she had filched her sister's lover.

Accordingly, the acute bedchamber-woman chose a moment when Ranulph had gone on an errand for the Queen, and her Majesty was out for an airing, to summon Gervas to the palace, who found her deep in the doldrums. What was the matter? Should he fetch a leech?

'No,' she replied sepulchrally; 'since he cannot minister to a mind that is diseased.' The only relief possible was to clear a surcharged heart from its perilous stuff, and that she would do forthwith.

There were no end to the vagaries, to the skilful fencing arts, of Mrs. Belfield, when 'twas worth her while to exhibit. With mixed emotions Gervas looked on the lady whom he had once deemed so good at bottom. But all other feelings were speedily merged in astonishment when, raising her voice to a shrill key, she accused him of deliberately seducing a weak, frail, loving woman into sin—of having forced her to play the spy upon the Court of which she formed a part, of having obliged her to assist in a

nefarious scheme for the kidnapping of the worthiest of Ministers.

While Gervas stood speechless, Pamela went off into hysterics; but remembering that vapours are not becoming to a thin throat and bosom, she speedily recovered, and launched forth into a diatribe anent traitors, seducers, unprincipled lewd men who work on the soft female breast for the worst purposes. Being in good wind, 'twas some time ere she was out of breath; and then my Lord Forfar, outraged and distressed, took his haughty leave.

Artful Pamela certainly had the best of the interview. When the Queen came in, relieved by the arrival of news that the King was returning home, she found Mrs. Belfield with eyes turned up and disordered garb, apparently half-dead from mental anguish; and was glad, if puzzled, to hear that my Lord Forfar had dared invade the palace to claim his bride, and had been repulsed, routed, and discomfited by one who had sinned and repented.

As for Gervas, his satisfaction and relief were not unalloyed. It is never quite pleasant to be jilted. And there was a grain of truth in the lady's raving. How could he have been so infatuated as to believe that future good would condone present evil? If Sir Robert had been taken to Barbadoes, what would his future life have been? He would have languished for a space and died, in a climate which meant death to one of Sir Robert's habit. And what was his

crime? Unswerving, if unscrupulous, loyalty to his chosen sovereign. Gervas, who so plumed himself on uprightness, had shown himself unscrupulous on behalf of his chosen Cause. For its behoof he had been quite prepared to sacrifice Pamela as well as himself, if need were. What cause could prosper when such weapons were employed? Wherein was James superior to George? Was the good of a whole people to be immolated to satisfy one grovelling personage of royal blood? As Bolingbroke had foreseen, when his faith receives a vital blow, great is the fall of the enthusiast, and dangerous to others is the catastrophe. For a man who cared not for worldly aggrandisement, and desired only to do well according to his lights, the thin end of the wedge of doubt was as cruel as a bursting bombshell. After the recent fiasco the Dawleyites in secret conclave had decreed the ejection of Jonah. He was to sit no more upon the haycock; no more to browbeat them into acts of folly. They would toy with him—amuse him with trifles—but the real plot should be worked by them alone. Thus all the schemers were at cross-purposes; while seeming to conspire against each other, their efforts tended to results that were equally desired. Pamela was dying to be rid of Gervas, Gervas of Pamela. The Dawleyites burned to be rid of Gervas, Gervas of them. As he had thought himself bound to Pamela, so did Lord Forfar consider himself bound to the conspirators.

That he would ever betray them none suspected; and they were rather pleased than not when his visits to Dawley became sparse and far between. He did not wish to hear more about the plot, unless they desired to impart information. Time lay on his hands. Like Barbara, he strove to divert his thoughts from the channel of private worries, and resumed his works of mercy among the prisoners.

'Tis easy to say we will divert our thoughts, but difficult sometimes to do so, specially if they chance to be disagreeable. While Gervas, in his plain blue coat, perambulated the noisome courts of Clink and Marshalsea, he could not help reflecting about Madam Crump. Strange enigma that she was, what would she think of the last turn of luck? Sir Charles must certainly be wrong as to her special interest, for her treatment had been of the coldest. Sir Charles was mad, and mad people are subject to hallucination. She must feel a little interest, though, in the misunderstanding 'twixt him and Mrs. Belfield, for was not that young woman—free now again—her sister? And what a sister! Goneril. How blind he had been, to be sure, in so mistaking both the women. 'Twas Bab, not Pamela, who needed kindly care and sympathy to keep her straight. To think that two such girls—their characters opposed in all ways—should be children of one sire! 'Twould be interesting to study Madam Crump by the light of new experience. A compli-

cated world. He would call again on Madam Crump; yes, certainly he would. But she was shortly returning to stage-triumphs, and, 'twas probable, would be too much engrossed to think of him, or even remember his existence.

Was it so indeed? When errant Charlotte, opening another budget of town news, explained that the match was off 'twixt Mrs. Belfield and the Jacobite, Bab looked as wan as in the Southwark days. Laying her head slowly down upon a table, she clasped her hands around her throat and sobbed as if her heart were breaking.

'Ah me!' mused Charlotte, looking gravely on. 'Though I've the evil-eye, 'tis not my fault this time. On bended knees I begged you would not take him—and you called me mad Cassandra!'

CHAPTER VI.

'JARS.'

HONEST JACK CRUMP was one of those persons of whom we spake but now, to whom a quarry seemed desirable so long as it skipped in front of him over dale and fell, but which ceased to be of value so soon as it was run down. And you must not be annoyed with Honest Jack on account of this trait in his otherwise delightful character; or if you are, must be content to bracket with him the whole army of British squires who are fox-hunters. Who cares for poor Reynard when the hounds have got him, except, maybe, to whip off his hapless brush for presentation to some fair? Honest Jack had been led a dance, had hunted his prey and run it down, and, like many another, yawned full in the face of the treasure for which he had yearned.

Except on those occasions when his eyes retired into his head to look after his bemuddled brains,

he never openly insulted his wife. He was too prudent a gentleman to be guilty of such folly, with Walpole within reach, however much she wearied him; for he knew that patience is a pitcher which, going often to the well, may crack and let out the Lord knows what, by way of leakage; but, nevertheless, he chafed under the long delay ere she could reappear at Drury and help to fill his pockets.

When persons of condition, or those who make believe to be such, marry, they are not to be tied by the ridiculous customs of common people, or to travel in the same coach. In company they must show breeding, *i.e.*, a carelessness that apes politeness and regard; at other times go each a distinct round of visiting, routing, carding, and so forth; and when they occasionally meet in private, raise their joys to the highest by eternal disputes about money or the lack of it.

Thanks to his growing mania (indulged in to escape from a hidden skeleton that would rattle) for the servants' game called whist, Mr. Crump found the subject of ready cash a vastly unpleasing one, and was apt to be offensive when his better-half importuned anent the butcher. How tiresome to be plagued about household books when you've been losing heavily at hazard! And Bab was so deficient in tact when Mr. Crump appeared of a morning with throbbing temples—she who, after what had

happened to her, ought to know better. Hang the butcher and the baker!

'If you're so out at elbows,' grumbled the gentleman, whose tongue felt like a parrot's, 'why can't you get some dross on your own account? The days have long gone by when sparks complimented madam with bank-bills under her chaney!'

Bab flushed with annoyance. To think that her own husband should wish her to accept presents from sparks!

'That thousand pounds a thousand years ago—of course you never learned from whence it came!' sneered Honest Jack; 'and spent it on pagods—spendthrift!'

'It came from Sir Robert Walpole,' returned Bab curtly; 'and I gave it to Lord Forfar.'

'To my Lord Forfar!' echoed Crump, with a gleam of suspicion. 'A thousand recklessly squandered on a Scotch pauper! 'Twould be plaguy useful now.'

'You'll never learn manners,' retorted Bab, to whom the subject was distasteful. 'You loll in the presence of your wife, ungartered, like a drunken justice!'

In sooth, the ways of the secretary *en ménage* betrayed his plebeian origin. Could this man, who was now so vulgarly indifferent, ever have cared for her? Were all men as fickle? Probably, since the modish husbands and wives among whom our couple

moved behaved much in the same way. 'By keeping men off,' says Mrs. Peachum to her daughter in the play, 'we do indeed keep 'em on.'

After all, Barbara had, as she keenly felt, no right to repine after deliberately promising to love, honour, and obey one man, when she really loved another. Her own complete shipwreck had so shattered all faith in herself that 'twas a relief to let the judgment of others decide for her; and yet, their guiding had turned out as unlucky as her own.

Well, she was no longer inclined to run amuck—but rather to try, late in the day, to make the best of things. In spite of all he might do, she was firmly resolved to be as true a wife as possible to this man whom she discovered that she could never esteem. She would study his comfort, obey in such things as were proper.

Happily all things mundane have an end. The idea of meetings in the next world is surely fable; for 'twould be woundily unpleasant for many wives to meet their husbands on t'other side the grave.

'I shall behave in my own house as I think fit,' grunted sullen Jack. 'Your wife! your wife! You're always flinging my wedding in my teeth—idiot that I was to be cajoled! I congratulate you, madam, on a double conquest; for as your beauty got the better of my reason, your temper hath got the better of my love!'

'Sir Robert comes here this morning,' observed Barbara presently.

'With more bank-bills? Nay, you need not look so waspish. He's inclined to be liberal, if you only ask.'

'That will I never,' responded madam. 'I sent for him to come hither about the "Golden Rump." 'Tis an anonymous satire which they want me to act in. A pretty thing! It teems with abuse of King and Government. I have kept the manuscript, and shall hand it to him.'

Was not this conduct calculated to vex a spouse? Hand him the manuscript of a seditious play, and claim no recompense!

'Give it to me,' said Jack. 'You'll never learn the value of money. When you reopen at the Lane, I shall keep the purse.'

'That you will not; nor will I beg of our benefactor,' returned curt Barbara.

'Shall I tell you the plain truth?' cried Crump, in ire.

''Twill be so great a pain as to put you in danger of your life!' scoffed the haughty lady.

Such being the style of endearment which became usual between this happy pair, 'tis no wonder that they avoided *têtes-à-tête*, and that Barbara employed her hours in the assiduous study of her art. She had selected Ophelia for her *rentrée*, and dreamily sat in her powdering cabinet, with the play upon her

knee, considering the luckless daughter of Polonius. 'Twixt the real woman and the poet's creation there were points of resemblance; and yet Bab found it difficult to portray Ophelia to her liking.

'Hearts are tough organs,' she mused. 'If every girl who was illused by man were to go mad and drown herself, the world would long since have been depopulated.' Her own cause for wishing to drown herself had been quite different. 'Broken fiddlesticks!' ejaculated the Diva, and flung the play into a corner. Sure few women have passed through more than she had done; and yet here she was, dreadfully well, with a stone in her bosom, hair carefully powdered, and patches skilfully applied. Presently her chair would be announced, and she would rustle into a dozen drawing-rooms, smirking at inane remarks, asking questions without waiting for replies. And so on for years and years, till came release. What a life! The White Pilgrim had been very near, but had glided off again—when to return? It would not do to think of herself, or of her husband, or of her household. She had railed at the stage and its stilted sham emotions! How wrong! Should we not bless anything that permits us to escape out of ourselves? She picked up the play again, striving to concentrate attention. How much to be envied was Polonius's child! No sooner did she realize the falseness of this wicked world than reason fled, giving place not to hideous soul-racking fantasies of

blood and murder, but to quaint conceits of owls and beggars' daughters. She retained her love of nature and of flowers, and sank out of life, on a warm comfortable afternoon, no doubt, in a rippling stream, garlanded with blossoms! Lucky Ophelia! Then, in spite of her will, the fancy of Barbara wandered to that awful night when she swayed on the slippery step and gazed at the cold silvery river fretting seaward under London Bridge. She clasped her rigid fingers tight over her eyes to shut out the vision.

What of the mad scene? Bab had groaned, moaned, writhed, starved, been torn with hot pincers, but had never been within measurable distance of lunacy. 'To-morrow is St. Valentine's day!' How should she chaunt it? The ringing cry with which Ophelia rushes out must be sharp and true—twang like an arrow to the bull's-eye. She rose, and letting down the rolling mass of her whitened hair, practised the final rush. No; this was not nature, but the baldest artifice; no better than the mouthing of less experienced days. She must go and study a lunatic —some infatuated wench who had been foolish enough to break her heart over a man and lose her reason. There must be many such in Bedlam. Yes; one of these days she would go to Bedlam—were not the corridors of that grim prison-house a fashionable promenade?—and see if there was some one there who could give a lesson in Ophelia.

Although she succeeded in summoning an interest in the proposed return to Drury, it was clear to the few who cared to watch that Barbara was far from happy; and Sir Robert felt a twinge in that he had advised the match.

'I admit that matrimony hath not improved Jack,' he said, in his good-humoured way, folding his hands over his waistcoat. 'He seems as if he'd something on his mind that he strove to banish. But we did it for the best. He's getting on in the world, or will, if he doth not drink too heavily. Every modish gentleman cards and wenches; you must expect that, my dear. Make the best of life. Depend on't, our lives are what we make 'em. Make your house pleasant, and see heaps of company. One so witty, so young, so beautiful, should have a *salon*. In the old days of the Lock of Hair, you were a bachelor, and a jolly one. Try it again, my pet, on a larger scale, as becomes a married woman.'

Sir Robert's advice was doubtless good. 'Tis well to make the best of things. But for his propensity for gambling, the circumstances of Honest Jack would by this time have been affluent. He had succeeded in grubbing up a variety of pickings, army agencies, lucrative sinecures, which, like the primrose, bloomed in the shade. His house in Kensington was a nice one; he had recently purchased an estate in Essex, which had swallowed his little capital; but there's no drain for ready money like a card-table. A

thousand pounds, as he sagely said, would be plaguy useful. Cash was scarce, but credit was good. He was right when he remarked that Bab in money matters was incorrigible. Despite harrowing experiences, she knew the value of a guinea no better now than in the days of the Lock of Hair, when what she received with one hand was freely scattered with the other. If the husband could be so lavish with his coin, why not the wife? As it was, her house was miserably dull, notwithstanding its handsome appointments. In the future she would see company at home, and thus avoid *têtes-à-tête*. 'Tis a terrible thing to become every day aware of some new trait of meanness, which strikes an honest nature at first with awe—then stirs it to indignation. 'Bankrupt in honour as in every virtue!' she exclaimed to herself with repugnance. Infatuated though he was as a gambler, he was sordid and avaricious. After a night of misfortune, he would reel home exceeding drunk, and curse his wife, with dark hints she could not understand, as the cause of some threatening disaster.

'Why did you ever cross my path?' he moaned. 'I shall be undone through you—I know it—some day!'

Again, the suggestion that he owed some injury (close impending, probably) to her. What could he mean? Abortive attempts to forget produced ill-luck at play, which in its turn led to extreme intemper-

ance; then to scenes of violent recrimination and illness. Steadfast in her resolve to be as wifely as she could, she sat in the darkened room listening in moody silence to his ravings. When well enough to totter forth, 'twas to the gaming-table; and so on in dreary round, till our poor Barbara wondered what would be the end on't. If he must gamble, clearly 'twould be best at home. Since the stormy nights in Golden Square she had taken a horror of cards. But 'twas as impossible to receive company without opening a card-room, as to give a ball without wax-candles. She could superintend. Alack! who knew better how to do so than herself? And when Honest Jack grew uproariously drunk, he could be snugly borne to bed.

Madam Crump's reunions were very *comme-il-faut*—no whiff in Kensington of Golden Square. Her own manners were so much improved by a high-bred self-control and stillness of demeanour in society, that fine ladies of the better stamp forgot the episode of blacklegs and demireps, and deigned to patronize her parties. The fact of the *ménage* being established in Kensington had its advantages. So insecure and rough a road as that to town could not be encountered at night by ladies without a considerable escort. Therefore not a few accepted their hostess's hospitality until the morning, thereby gaining a night in country air, reviving to faded roses.

But these new arrangements involved considerable

expense, and Jack, out at elbows himself, save now and then when he made a lucky *coup*, was hard to bleed; which angered his extravagant wife so much that she grew sarcastic, declaring, when he evaded weekly payments, that when his hour arrived to cross the Styx he would bilk old Charon of his penny.

Hence, sometimes the tradesmen were paid, and sometimes not; and Barbara foresaw more visits to the spunging-house in the not far-distant future. 'Twas Jack, however, who must go next time, and not his better-half; there was this one good point, at least, in being a wife.

All this pointed as clearly as a shadow on a dial to the fact that she must return to Drury. Dissipation, as she had found to her cost, is a poor healer. Hard work would prove a better anodyne. But hand over her salary to Jack! No, indeed. There would be storms, threats, blows. She could always appeal to Sir Robert in an emergency, or, at least, threaten in her turn. Thus would she keep the wolf from the door, and fill the void within her breast.

Gervas used to visit the theatre in old times. Perchance he would again—next season. Then would she prove that the sacred flame was there, and dazzle him with its brilliancy. This was worth striving for; a worthy goal. The veil of honest engrossing labour should mask the sullied Past. For his sake, although he knew it not, she would be

great; and he should confess as much. Art should light her path—its music stir a new-born soul to life. She would learn to *live*, and thus achieve content.

True to her resolve, she produced for the edification of Sir Robert the 'Golden Rump,' and unwittingly started a conflagration. Having learned his lesson that 'tis imprudent to despise one's enemies, and having found that the use of a besom is often salutary, he was in no mood to accept unnecessary insults. The carpings of the Dawley junta must needs be put up with, since no means showed itself at present of falling upon Bolingbroke. But the scribblers—the Grub Street geniuses! No, indeed. Stocks, pillory, and horse-pond should reward the buzzing of such impudent flies. Had not Queensberry and Gay been made to wince? That arrogant booth-proprietor, Mr. Fielding, had a year ago nibbed a venomous pen, and produced a *thing* (it couldn't be called a play) in which he, Sir Robert, was held up to obloquy. Now he had taken the little Haymarket, and, by help of the 'Grand Mogul's Company of Comedians,' intended to enact a series of pasquinades of an offensive character. But this 'Golden Rump' was worst of all, opening a vista of such serious libel as called for legislation.

Secretary Crump, among other things, was Master of the Revels, but his authority was absurdly circumscribed. On occasion, the Chamberlain was

supposed to have power to interfere if needful; but this power was contested, and a dead-letter. A regular licenser must be established, without whose fiat it would not be possible to play a piece at all. 'Twas just like the dear little Whig to have come forward, and have shown the manuscript in time. The 'Golden Rump' should be strangled before birth, and such excesses be made impossible in future.

Uprose Sir Robert in his place, and great was the outcry of the Dawleyites. If 'twas seditious to act, 'twould be equally so to print; and then, pamphlets being gagged, the liberty of the Press would be destroyed. Fancy a power of prohibition being lodged in one man! And he, the tyrant, a serf of the Court! Wooden shoes were nothing to this new danger.

'You've no right to put excise on wit,' snarled Cincinnatus from his haycock. 'To the few who have it, 'tis often their only property.'

Chesterfield and Pulteney declaimed and harangued till the walls of St. Stephen's rang with the delinquencies of Bluestring. But in vain. The ever-victorious Sir Robert had his way. The Bill was passed, which ever since hath kept theatric managers in order, and purged the stage of its grossness—a Bill which never was designed as a restraint on liberty, but as a proper prevention of licentiousness and libel.

The success which attended the measure comforted Bab somewhat as, in her umbrageous seclusion, she assiduously studied. For Gervas's sake! To her romantic turn of mind the spur was a delightful one. On each succeeding day she dissected Ophelia carefully.

Idle now, and purposely turning his attention away from politics, it was natural that Lord Forfar should send a message to Kensington by faithful Charlotte. In other days, he said, he had been permitted to admire Madam Philpot. Might the favour be accorded him of attending her parties now and then? But a short while ago, mistrusting herself, Bab would have returned a flat refusal. Now she felt strong. What had she to do with love, now or ever? Yet why this message? At one time, she had almost thought that he liked her, and lo! next minute he was the betrothed of hateful Pamela! Oh, self-deceiver! No fear of love-passages from him, wrapt as he was in the absurd Pretender.

If Cupid dared to show a wing-tip, he could soon be sent to the right-about. Why should my lord wish to come to Kensington? It was owing to Charlotte's blabbing, doubtless. Had she made other foolish speeches? No. Never another hint had passed her lips after that first mistake. Not but what he often tried to pump Sir Charles, his curiosity being tickled. Did the twain often meet, then? Not very

often now; but since my lord had resumed his efforts for the prisoners, he needed help sometimes; and who so glad as Charlotte to be useful to one who was so good to the distressed?

So he went among the prisoners again? With tender sadness Bab remembered the day when the rough turnkey said he was an angel. And so modest and secret in his acts of mercy! He had not passed under the yoke of suffering; yet could he feel for others' sorrow.

She—what did she do for others, result of wholesome discipline? Nothing. She could not even control an unruly tongue, and be submissive to her husband! Where were her Patience and Humility? As she examined herself with growing shame, Charlotte, once started, babbled of Lord Forfar. If dearest Barbara only knew how single-minded! He followed the Pretender's banner merely because he was unfortunate and weak. The gloomy reserve, which to many was an insuperable bar to intercourse, was a protecting crust. Else would the tender nature it concealed have been devoured long since by the designing.

'He is always thinking of others, never of himself,' proceeded Charlotte. 'He is so good to me—so good—so good!' and Charlotte looked up with such intense veneration that Bab clapped her fingers on her mouth.

'Peace, boy!' she said, with a sad smile, 'or

you'll have me deep in love with him! Teasing wench, be still! or tell me something of his faults.'

Charlotte sighed and murmured, 'If it might have been!'

Bab's heart did not flutter; the hand with which she caressed Sir Charles was steady. She could trust herself. Charlotte might tell my lord that he was welcome; that the actress in intervals of study would be honoured by his visits. Yes. Feeling secure, 'twould be well to commune with Gervas. 'Twould be like a draught of fair spring water. She would sit at his feet and learn; striving to imbibe some of his goodness. It would be delicious, too, since his curiosity was awake, to show how wrong he had been in his unjust estimate of herself. Perhaps when he knew her better she would chide him, and bid him be more careful of delivering rash verdicts upon women. Perchance he would ask for the key of her many changes; why she deliberately selected the wrong path, when inwardly she loved the right? What answer could be given to that? She would fence and slily lead him on into by-paths and quagmires, concealing the precious secret, leaving the inquirer baffled. That secret of course might never be divulged. But he should learn the difference between her somewhat chastened self and Pamela, and humbly crave for pardon. Such communings could bring her naught but good. Of

course, whatever he might say should be safe from the prying of Crump.

Certainly Lord Forfar would be welcome. If Honest Jack objected, so much the better. The ill-mannered oaf had dared tell her t'other day with complacency that women like the men who bully 'em. He should never bully her into doing things she disapproved. If Gervas's speeches were not repeated to him, he would probably disapprove Lord Forfar's visits. 'Twould be a fine chance of showing that if he elected to go his ways, so also would she go hers. Whereby you will understand that the Humility and Patience that she pleased herself with contemplating were but sorry scarecrows, and that Barbara still stood in need of teaching.

Somehow, the more Madam Crump studied Ophelia the less she could get inside that personage. 'Why do people weep so over Mrs. Polonius?' she kept inquiring of herself. 'A fragile colourless girl devoid of spirit, unfit for a workaday world. If a chisel turns its edge before the first obstruction, we fling it away as worthless and seek another. If a human intellect succumbs under the first shock, we can give it pity, and that is all. Why such a pother over Ophelia's ill-borne woes?' Since she could only feel contemptuous about the character, 'twas clear that Madam Crump was not likely to shine as Mrs. Polonius. Perhaps you will say that considering her own trials she had not yet profited much. And

yet, though very far from perfect, she had indeed profited hugely. I vow I would not desire perfection for her. Meekness in the abstract is vastly well, but your real human angel a puling person.

Civilization may preach as it will, but we are evidently meant to fight here below. Explosions of gunpowder clear the atmosphere. Efforts at self-preservation, struggles to save our nasal organs from being crushed against the wall, send the blood tingling healthily along the veins. Even when sorely worsted you can only die. The duello, though some people are beginning to deprecate the appeal to arms as savage, hath its good side; for it keeps honour bright, the feeling of what we owe to our manhood sensitive. War may be a terrible thing, but 'tis as good for nations as occasional phlebotomy for bodily health; the one tends to banish humours, the other to increase our self-reliance, encourage independence.

Barbara had fought tooth and nail, but with a badly tempered sword, which bent in contact with a bone, and therefore she had been stricken down. Had the weapon been good she might have triumphed. She saw that now; and whilst slowly and gradually recovering one by one from wounds and bruises, was none the less prepared to fight—but with a better weapon. Here was a case in point.

Patience is an excellent buckler, humility a useful pad; for the parrying of assaults, not for returning blows. There are moments, she was still convinced,

when you must strike back, or the world would be ruled by bullies. Fancy being content to receive thump, thump, thump, all through a life of three-score years and ten, without returning one! How monotonous, how unnecessarily painful! In the matter of Mrs. Polonius even, Bab had no idea of being conquered. While despising the milk-and-water thing, she intended to shine as Ophelia. She had numbly been overwhelmed with meekness once for a short time, and could therefore, in some fashion, portray it. She had never been mad, therefore the mad scene troubled her. 'Twas a stile to be got over, a wall to be leaped, a difficult task worth accomplishing. Quite briskly she tied on a becoming hat, after an early breakfast, while Jack yet snored over a debauch; took coach to Chelsea, a wherry to Tower Stairs, and threaded her way among jostling traders in the direction of Moorfields.

After the quiet of Kensington, the noise and scurry of the City almost took away her breath. Each member of the seething anthill was bent on out-witting the other. Gazette-mongers shouted intelligence from France. What news of such a ship? yelled an insurer. What price bear currants at Zante? There was nought that shrieking brokers could not sell, from logwood to spiders' brains, hens' teeth to the blue of plums. Jacobite rue, Whig herb of grace—both were in the market. There were bustling notaries, tied each to an inkhorn;

sneaking usurers. What a perspiring crew of money-mongers! What a trucking and bartering, buying and selling, borrowing and lending, paying and receiving! There were crafty fellows, too, in the early morning bearing gifts to basket-justices—things of worth for value to be received. A dozen of right claret for a reprieve from the whipping-post; a hogshead of canary for his worship for leave to open a coffeehouse; a box of tea for his lady for assistance out of a scrape. Yonder a *posse* bustling into Change; a poet in search of a City magnate to whom to sell a dedication.

Some cannibal man-catchers were sweeping along Cheapside, and before them fled a scuttling crowd of the poor, or weak, or unprotected.

The pressgangs were vastly busy for the behoof of the plantations. At one corner Bab was well-nigh overset by a running youth with three stout fellows after him, crying, 'Stop thief!'

'I am no thief,' panted the boy to those who seized him, 'but an honest lad, who've been chained in a cellar to be shipped to the Indies.' Whereupon the fury of the populace was turned on the pursuers, who were ducked in the nighest water.

Further on there was a young man flying in his shirt with a red-hot poker in his fist, and two crimps following. He had been put to bed, as it transpired, and his clothes removed, for security; but forcing the door, he had rushed into the taproom of the den,

and grasping a poker which chanced to be in the fire, had defended himself bravely. These crimps also fared badly, for a butcher standing by declared that he'd been in a similar situation but a few months previously.

'Oh, Sir Robert! Sir Robert!' murmured Bab, quickening her pace. Right glad was she when she reached London Wall and beheld the Gate of Bedlam.

A stately fabric was the ancient hospital for such unhappy wights as had lost their reason—a lofty building, similar in design to the Palace of the Tuileries. 'Twas built after the Great Fire; was five hundred feet long by forty; could boast a garden with neat walks of freestone; a grass plot in the middle for the delectation of such lunatics as were a little well of their distemper. The splendid exterior was a mockery of the sadness within, adorned as it was with high-pitched roofs and ornate balconies; to say nothing of the fine gateway, capped by Cibber's statues. The work of Colley's father, these, representing the two phases of madness, melancholy and raving, which folks might view inside.

The entrance-fee was but a penny, and into these grievous corridors flocked all the morbid ones for whom Newgate was not sufficiently exciting.

At the time when Barbara stood there ringing the bell, two wings had just been completed under

provisions of a Mr. Barkham's testament, containing each a pair of handsome galleries, as well as a row of cells. The stricken creatures did much as they listed in these low and dreary passages. Such as were deemed dangerous were chained naked to the wall, bedded on straw like hounds—whipped like dogs if noisy. When prisons were as we know them, 'twould be hard to expect much of asylums.

Cold in winter was severe, for none of the openings were glazed; but then the lash is warming to the blood; so is straw when we burrow in it. Bedlam in this year of grace, 1736, differed but little from the earlier one of which Shakespeare speaks in 'Lear.' Bonds, irons, chains, manacles, stocks, darkness, flagellation, were still the remedies adopted for the recovery of errant reason. The Pilgrim had mercy on most; but some, strange to say, recovered. Such as were voted harmless had leave to wander in the street and obtain a subsistence by begging, each one to be easily recognised by a ring soldered on his arm.

By the admission of visitors, who usually called here after viewing the lions in the Tower, the hospital derived an income of £400 a year, and the practice remained in force until 1770. And a very lively exhibition too, one that found much favour with Crimp, Cramp, and Crumpling; for some patients being objects of resentment to others were grievously entreated, running out of reach as far as

their chains would let them—a diverting spectacle, which was rendered the more merry by the long unfastened blanket-gown which was their only covering, and swung gaily in the breeze. The Committee never came near the place for months. One of the house-surgeons in this year was mad himself; another never sober. So long as the keepers were civil to the visitors no one heeded their doings.

Bab passed along the male corridor—where some were preaching, some full cry a-hunting, some shrieking, some weeping—to the iron wicket that divided the two purgatories of the sexes.

Why enlarge on what she beheld on the male side? Hath not Mr. Hogarth limned the scene for you as a climax to his 'Rake's Progress,' with more eloquent strokes than any of this poor pen? Bab was not shocked, and did not shudder, for, like her Majesty, '*elle en avait vu biens d'autres!*' Poh! a mere handful of raving screaming wretches. She was there for study, not for idle gaping, like yonder overdressed hussies who were giggling through the sticks of their fans.

A keeper was sprawling at the gate, humming a tune, with an occasional strong epithet and call for silence. What did the pretty lady want? To look at the female ward? Unusual, that! Females generally came to look at the men. Was there any woman here who had gone mad for love? Of course there were—dozens. All madwomen went cracked

either on the subject of love or of religion. Anyone who had a passion for flowers? Yes; there chanced to be just such an one, recently drafted from St. Luke's, where typhus was broken out. They said she was getting well. Not she. Never was woman madder. A tiresome dirty wretch, who always kept scrawling upon everything. Ingenious she was in collecting chalk and dirt. Unless admitted to the garden she screamed enough to turn you dizzy; but once there, was satisfied, for she wrapt herself about in leaves and grasses; but in her cell again was sure to be up to mischief. Either with chalk or a sharp stone, she scrawled a name—everywhere, on floor and wall, and could not be corrected. She'd have to return to St. Luke's, for he, the keeper, was sick of the slut, and if she caught the fever so much the better for all.

Thus chattering, the polite janitor, on receipt of a groat, conducted the pretty lady along the passage, down the spiral stair, opened another wicket, and pointing to a yard, departed; explaining that the creature wasn't dangerous, if a dirty plague and nuisance. Perhaps when the lady had seen enough she would shut the door after her, and bolt it on the outside. Rain? No matter, so far as concerned the lunatic. A good sousing was cooling to hot wits. There were lots of people within call in case of accidents. He, the janitor, was wanted above; for some of 'em, being restless, needed a cowing eye.

Left alone, Bab examined the yard minutely in search of the patient. Callous though you may be rendered by frequent contemplation of misery, there is something about a madhouse which will affect the most inured. 'Tis awful to realize what human nature is, deprived of the restraints of fear and shame; how thin is the barrier that separates the most godlike man from the ape.

The visitor, moved more than she was aware of by the sights in the gallery above, glanced quickly round the yard—a square enclosure, surrounded on all sides by buildings. From the windows, or rather apertures, above, groups of distorted faces gibbered like goblins; bare, skinny arms shook menacing fists and fingers; growling throats gurgled appalling epithets, obscene and blasphemous. Where was the patient? The lower portion of the walls were covered with trailing ivy—all save in one corner, where the long tendrils had been detached, and were lying in a heap. Under the glossy leaves—something. A bare leg! Ophelia was hiding herself as Eve did in the garden.

Advancing gently, Bab moved the branches—an emaciated woman, of any age from twenty to fifty; her flannel-gown torn in soiled shreds; her face concealed by a thick veil of hair, which hung down below her breast. It is not always well to study direct from Nature; for that lady in a scurvy mood much needs the halo of softening poesy.

Sweet bells once, perhaps; how terribly jangled now!

Kneeling down, Barbara parted the tangled curtains. From the thin, dry lips hissed foul words. Contracted pupils; a dry grey skin; an evil savour; fingers whose nails were worn to the quick through much grubbing in the earth. The woman shrank yet closer to the wall, rattling the chain that was padlocked to her waist, and clutched the dishevelled curtain—not quite close though, for through the strands a pair of cunning eyes, bright as a raven's, followed the movements of the stranger. A piteous sight; for this woman must have once been comely. Her form was finely shaped, though wasted; her features, under the smearing dirt, were regular, if thin and ashen.

Bab sat on the ground, and looked attentively at the patient. What if she were to give a new reading of Laertes' sister—banish the traditional poppies and white satin, and show a distraught repulsive creature such as this! 'Twould be novel, artistic, terrifying—a splendid contrast to the earlier picture of a gentle high-bred maiden. How true would ring the grief of Laertes at the change—the horror of Claudius and the Queen!

Is it ever justifiable in art, or is it not, to exhibit the ugly and repulsive? Sometimes, in guise of foil, but briefly and rapidly; for the more perfect the portrayal, the more repulsive. Are the best results

in art always the beautiful? Yes, if designed to be dwelt upon. Doubtless, a thing of horror is not to be fixed and lingered over. Hence, many pictures (specially of the Spanish School) representing martyrdoms and crucifixions, although well painted, are bad in art. But with the stage it should be different; for the impressions which theatrical artists can give cannot but be fleeting. Horror has a fascination of its own by no means to be despised. Forked lightning is in itself an ugly livid thing; but it strikes the imagination because, terrible, it is here and gone. Beauty, we are told, is Truth; Truth, Beauty. Is it? In a novel, or on the stage character may, by its truthful strength, eclipse—outshine mere beauty of form and colour, and come straight home to us as Truth—may, for the gaining of an end, be more valuable than loveliness.

The highest results of classic sculpture (loftiest and purest of all the arts) are still and devoid of movement; but then they are intended to be our constant loved companions—to grow on our physical and mental retina. Not so with acting or with novels. In the latter you read on—an impression is given with more or less vividness according to the artist's skill. It comes and passes—effective, evanescent, like the lightning. In novels, certainly, the repulsive may be employed for a crafty object—like an occasional discord in music.

But in the case of this proposed new reading of

Ophelia? Madness is a form of decay; and all decay is unsightly, since it points to corruption—the weak side of godlike man. And yet, accepting the fact that the best of us is grass of the field—here to-day, to-morrow in the oven—decay hath its own sad beauty; as a lesson is salutory and awe-inspiring. What are the gorgeous autumnal tints but premonitions of the sepulchre? Autumn is beautiful; so is serene old age, which waits, having done with the turmoil of Life. But madness is, in the very fact of its existence, so fearful and awful a thing that, sure, it never can be admissible, *if it is truly depicted.* What then of Ophelia? Must her lunacy be portrayed in a conventional and ridiculous manner always, as it generally hath been? or may the artist strike an intentional discord, and horrify the audience as well as Laertes and the Queen?

This was a knotty point; and Bab, after looking at the various facets, decided again to run amuck—this time against convention; to astonish the beaux with a bit of genuine nature; depict, not a shadowy unreal maid, no more material than the soughing wind, but a stricken raving being of flesh and blood, reduced by toppled reason to the condition of the meanest animal. She sat so still, absorbed in meditation, that the gibbering voices above ceased to gurgle. The song of a stray bird rose somewhere heavenward; the patient's claws slowly opened the curtain, and the lunatic peered

through. Restless, never quiet claws, clutching, scraping, burrowing. All the vitality of the creature was concentrated in the eyes and claws.

The actress drew from a pocket a pair of tablets to dot down a note or two. The glittering gilded stylus attracted the raven eyes; the claws went forth with a quick swoop to grasp it. To study the actions of the maniac the visitor was there, so she allowed her to do as she listed. Crowing like a gladsome child, the creature flung back the veil, stretched an emaciated arm, played with the toy awhile as if striving to recall its use; then, suddenly remembering, began writing with it on the wall. The rugged stone took but a faint imprint. Again she wrote—again—again; and moaned dissatisfied.

'What is it?' Bab whispered, striving to calm her trouble.

'He will not come, although I've called him often,' the maniac mumbled hoarsely; 'and yet he must—he must—he must—for the rats are ready—ready—ready—waiting to eat him up.'

Darting a fierce look of hungry vengeance over her bared shoulder, the woman turned to the wall, and began to write again. What was this? 'Twas no delusion. The words faintly traced in shaky characters were—'Honest Jack!'

Drawing in her breath with a quick gulp, Bab looked at the woman and the wall. Honest Jack! Could it be that this ruin was the work of her own

lord? Wrenching the stylus from the maniac's struggling talons, while she battled, and fought, and gnashed for it, Bab added another word—'Crump.' With a shout the woman clapped her hands, and crowed and rocked in glee.

'Now he'll come, he'll come!' she sang. 'The rats shall have him. Come, Honest Crump, my husband!'

Barbara turned deadly white, and the stylus dropped from her fingers.

'*Your husband!*' she gasped.

As when about to subside under the waves, a whole career flashes before the eyes, so did Bab read the mystery that for so long had puzzled her. When a clue is given we marvel at our short-sightedness. She saw now in letters of fire the full depth of her husband's turpitude. HER husband! Not so. She was undone, for this maniac was the real wife. 'Twas plain now why he had shilly-shallied for so long, scheming to win the prize without aid of book or parson. The look of injury was now explained; for in a calmer moment he had regretted his folly, and, being a coward, hated the woman he had wronged. The sight of the second wife recalled to his mind a constant peril. 'Twas the tale of the hanging sword and wearing thread. This grovelling ruin was the wife, and she the mistress.

Bab rose and staggered against the wall with a great cry, like that which had been wrung from her

on the river-bank—sharp and shrill, yet so long and wailing that 'twas as though the life must go forth in its full volume. Could the new Ophelia give such a wail in fleeing from Laertes and the Queen she would indeed startle the beaux. The lunatics in the windows chattered and mowed and shivered like birds in presence of the hawk. The ruin turned from the wall and clapped her hands again. 'Twas fine! 'Twas brave! The intruder lay upon her back, motionless and white. With peals of wild laughter the maniac gathered up her chain and whirled around the yard, with flying hair and streaming garments, crying:

'The rats! the rats!'

The groups in the windows took up the shout, they knew not why. 'The rats! the rats!' resounded on all sides, echoed from wall to wall and back again, while Bab lay white and motionless, felled by the new stroke.

Poor suffering Barbara! O, Fate! why choose one quarry and delight to hunt it to the death? Was her nature too haughty still for thee? Too stiff-necked? Must she indeed be broken and quite humbled?—be crushed into the dust?

Their attention called by the disturbance, a crowd of men ran into the yard. Seizing the gyrating demon by its chain, the keeper dragged away the dancing lunatic, while, with exclamations of surprise, two gentlemen kneeled by the prone figure.

'Our Barbara!' cried Charlotte in accents of despair.

'Madam Crump it is indeed!' murmured Lord Forfar. 'What was she doing here? The maniac must have frightened her.'

Gervas considered what 'twas best to do. The lady was in a dead swoon, was snoring heavily, but would soon revive. Borne in by careful hands, she was laid upon a bed; but hour after hour passed, and she did not recover.

Kensington was a long way off.

'We will take her to the Bear,' Charlotte suggested.

'Twas but a short distance to Tower Stairs; thence to Southwark by water but a bowshot. The advice was good. Folks who beheld the sad convoy said:

''Tis a body going to the surgery at Mr. Guy's new hospital,' and passed on whistling.

As the shades of evening crept into the chamber wherein the unconscious figure lay, Gervas became alarmed. Several times he placed a mirror to the parted lips, lest Bab should have stolen a march into another world. Her beauty, now that unmolested he could mark its delicate loveliness, struck him afresh as a revelation. The luxuriant crown of tresses, grey with the powder of yesterday; the broad intelligent brow; the finely-chiselled nostril, which told its tale of breeding; the plastic shoulders and arms; the blue-veined throat and bosom!

'Nature hath been lavish to thee,' mused Lord Forfar; 'for, if I'm not deceived, thy soul is as fair as thy face, concealed as it is from man by the mask of waywardness.'

Night was coming on. A leech must be summoned; a messenger despatched for Mr. Crump. Would she never shake off the trance?

Charlotte was against sending for Crump, whereupon she was chid by precise Lord Forfar. Sir Charles must be crazy, indeed. If a wife be smitten by a shock, who send for first if not her husband?

It was far into the small hours ere Crump answered the summons; for, as usual, having awakened from the slumber of intemperance, he had avoided his spouse, and sought new pleasures in the town. He was half-seas over again when the messenger found him at the Cocoa Tree; but was quite sobered when my Lord Forfar related what had happened. Received a shock at Bedlam from a madwoman! His heart leaped into his mouth with fear. That dangling sword which his own besotted folly had hung up—was it fallen on his pate? Bedlam? *She*, as he knew well, was at St. Luke's. Curse her! why was she not dead? By some unlucky chance on which he had not calculated, had the two women come face to face, who, of all females, should never have met? It could scarcely be; and yet what other shock might his wife receive from any madwoman that could induce so dead a swoon?

As a vista of gruesome possibilities rose before him, spreading as far as the horizon, Jack bit his nails, and had much ado to maintain a decent composure. Remorse and regret brought out a chill damp upon his skin; not sorrow either for the first or second wreck, but for himself in that unbridled passions should have led him into such a quandary. If 'twas as he feared, how would Bab behave? Already her attitude was unseemly in its disrespect; her tongue mordant. Would she set up a clatter and publish her woes to the world? Hardly, for she was proud. That was a mercy. But what if, stung out of her pride by honest indignation, she should run to her friend Sir Robert? O fool, besotted! Addlepated idiot to play such a trick on one who was his patron's favourite! Were there not a thousand other women whom he might have ruined with impunity? Sir Robert, low as were his morals, would resent a trick on Barbara, which, if played upon another female, would have been looked on as mere skilful gallantry. He would be ousted from his fat sinecures, thrown forth into the cold. With his own foot he would have kicked down the ladder while only half-way up its rungs. Thanks to the accursed cards, he was in debt; would be a disgraced pauper. There'd be nothing for it but to turn Jacobite, and that nowadays was a sorry prospect. Bab's mouth must be closed. He would take her home at once and come to terms somehow, within

the chaste walls of the Kensington Paradise. The leech demurred to the proposal. 'Twas as much as her life was worth. Lord Forfar looked gloomy and displeased; Charlotte dismally reproachful. Strange! What was Charlotte doing here? what possible bond could there be 'twixt her and my Lord Forfar? 'Twas indecent in Lord Forfar to dare to be gloomy and displeased.

A swift gush of jealousy arose in the undisciplined mind of Mr. Crump. Was the tale a concocted one? Why should Bab and Lord Forfar have come together at Bedlam, of all places? Was Charlotte a go-between? Careless as she was about money, she must like a man ere she could present him with a thousand pounds! He would charge Bab with an intrigue! And yet, if 'twas as he feared, her answer would be that he had no legal claim on her. What a silly misjudging zany he had been!

In face of the protests of leech, Charlotte, Gervas, and mine host of the Bear, it would not do to move her. 'She is awake at last,' the leech announced, 'but in great pain'—this with a sly smile—and Crump trembled lest she should have betrayed anything. In ill-concealed agitation he declared that he must go to his beloved spouse; that no hands but his should nurse his treasure; and clumsily thanking the Scotchman for his disinterested kindness, skipped up the stairs, while Charlotte gazed gravely after him.

A very sudden gush of affection this! Charlotte foreboded the worst, longed to stand 'twixt his ill-omened shadow and her dear patroness; but morn was breaking, and what would Mr. Medlicote say if his perukier failed to appear? Servitude was mighty irksome, Sir Charles reflected with impatience. The yoke was growing galling; and yet it protected its wearer from the bailiffs. She must be off. Would Lord Forfar watch? That punctilious person said that the husband having claimed his own, 'twas not for him to meddle; and Charlotte went her way, beset by apprehension and dread of more evil in the offing.

Barbara was awake and very pale, but composed and quiet, her lips twitching now and then with pain. She looked on Jack with such chill displeasure, while her great eyes burned with scorn, that his ire kindled, and he resolved to brazen it out. She heard him to the end of his bluster, then said quietly:

'I know you now. She left St. Luke's because of the typhus; call at Bedlam and pay your devoirs to your wife.'

She knew all, then. This was the contemptuous mood that he most dreaded. She was capable at this minute of blabbing her woes to anyone—to the ostler or chambermaid. Ruin prospective and complete stared him in the face. Instinctively his hand sought his sword-hilt.

'Do!' she said with composure. 'You've slain my mind; murder now my body. God knows I yearn for deliverance! Dead women tell no tales.'

Rendered frantic by his fears and her cold taunts, Mr. Crump drew the hanger from its scabbard and cried:

'You wrong me! Death before dishonour! 'Tis myself I mean to kill!'

An insulting farce, then, was to be added to other outrages. He kill himself? How highly probable!

'Wrong and honour from your lips!' she scoffed. 'Courage may be great where danger is but small, in order to conceal the cowardice that is concomitant of guilt. Honest Jack!' she continued, with a ripple of laughter that faintly echoed the peal within Bedlam yard. 'Totally devoid of all principle, all feeling, as of all mercy or compunction, your epithet of "Honest" is but one imposition more. Like all the rest, you deemed a bastard, a painted player, to be fit only for a mistress. Nay! stab yourself if it pleases your humour to end the scene in tragedy! Yet 'twere a pity not to summon witnesses; for so exalted a hero should make his exit before more than one spectator!'

Crump ground his teeth and had half a mind to make a tragedy of it in real earnest, and silence the mocker. His colour rose, and his blue eyes

sank before that biting, withering contempt. Diplomacy and parleying might still patch up a truce. Appearances in the future might be saved, the chasm bridged, so far as concerned the world. He sat on the bed, and taking her hand in his, held it, though she winced.

'Come, come!' he whispered. 'I have done wrong; but 'twas from excess of love. My life and honour are in your keeping. What can you win by an exposure, except the publication of your own misfortune? What is there to prove that the woman is my wife? Her testimony, as one insane, would go for naught. She shall be more carefully guarded. For your sake, if not for mine, be prudent.'

Bab withdrew her hand, and sighing, remained silent for awhile, and Crump rejoiced exceedingly. Hath not Mr. Addison declared that the woman who hesitates is lost? But for a new circumstance Barbara would not have hesitated. They say that when a lady hath substantial cause to hate her husband, the business is half done. Indeed, Madam Crump did hate the man who ought to have been her husband, with every fibre of her being. No softness for herself should have stayed the thrust, and yet she wavered.

'I told you your danger was but small,' she slowly said. 'Promise me that never in days to come shall we ever be alone together from this moment until death, and my lips are sealed.'

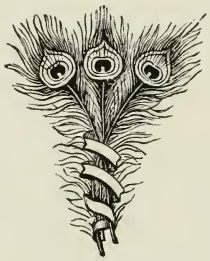
Mr. Crump was another man. The dangling sword was down, and had not hurt him. He breathed again, for a heavy incubus was gone from off his chest. How whimsical is it, he thought, that while men dislike those whom they have injured, women have a sneaking kindness, despite of outcry, for those who've hurt them. The saw is a true one that prateth of a wife, a dog, and a walnut-tree. Honest Jack quite beamed, and was profuse in expressions of gratitude. No man would be more respectful and considerate than he. His drunkenness and gambling were sprung from terrors, and now that the cause for fear was past he would reform. In the old days had he not been respectful; as sober as most men of fashion; as tender, as ardent in his wooing? They would commence a new honeymoon, bill and coo like doves; be as unmodish as a pair of rustics. Seeing what he had risked to call her his very own, what anxiety and dread, his proud beauty should be flattered rather than resentful. Mr. Crump in his relief quite frisked like unto the innocent lamb, and then squatted down again upon the bed.

'I must not teach my sweet one to be vain,' he laughed, 'for in sooth she hath more than a share of that commodity.'

Bab listened with wonder and contracted brows, and stemmed the flood of his delight.

'Mistake me not,' she observed in curt tones that

cut like a knife. 'I loathe and abhor and despise you, and always shall. I would not raise a little finger to save you from a cruel death. 'Tis a truce, and not a peace I offer you. Before the world we will go on as heretofore, since the poor thing is hopelessly deranged and never can claim her place. Not for your sake and not for mine——for the sake of our unborn child.'



CHAPTER VII.

THE PILGRIM CALLS AGAIN.

THE effects of the shock that resulted from the discovery at Bedlam were not to be shaken off in a day or week or month. Honest Jack heard the communication of the lady whom we must still call his wife with mixed feelings in which satisfaction predominated. In all his calculations he had never reckoned upon this—a bond that tied her to him by the closest bands which can unite a man and woman. She might be provoked to fling dirt upon herself, but would never brand her offspring. Smarting from a wound but just received, she had vented her pique and eased her injured pride with hard and bitter words. Words kill no one. He would obligingly forget them, for in good sooth she had cause for complaining. Time would heal the wound; she would accept the inevitable. The woman should go back at once to St. Luke's, and be placed in the

most infected quarter. What did they mean by drafting creatures from one pesthouse to another without orders? a nice piece of officious philanthropy. Next they would be sweeping the prisons. What a comfort it would be, both for himself and Barbara, when he should go to her some day and whisper, 'She is gone!' Both would breathe freely, and forget the ugly episode.

There was no gainsaying that Bab was a fascinating wench; would be a useful helpmeet in the way of gathering coin and winning favours. At present he would respect her odd whims, and leave her to herself, but by-and-by would apply the screw of this promised infant for his own purposes. So soon as the wound was closed, he would let her know that there must be no more minx airs; that he intended to claim the duty and obedience of a wife and mother; that the interests of the trio were to be identical, and that there must be one master in a household. In truth, he had behaved wickedly of late—worse, foolishly. But the cause for apprehension had vanished. Honest Jack made up his mind to turn over a new leaf, and saw in perspective a long and prosperous career.

All did not go, however, quite as he desired. Walpole on hearing of the catastrophe flew to the Bear, full of condolence. What had chanced? His little Whig was not wont to be timorous or frighted by a bogie. But women are queer cattle. You

never know what they will do next. That is why we love them so. They are for ever breaking out in fresh places, performing unexpected antics, perpetrating delightful follies, showing weakness where we expected strength, and *vice versâ*.

Bab had been frighted by a maniac; more than this could not be wrung from her. And quite enough, the gossips cackled, considering her situation. It was a week before she could be moved to Kensington; and once there, lay in an elbow-seat by her boudoir window, or in the garden, with a play-book neglected on her knee. Although her general health had been good of late, her constitution during the last year or so had been severely tried. 'Twas a wonder, said the leech, that she had ever pulled through at all. His nostrums, he admitted, could do little good. Time and fresh air accomplish miracles. Would she like to take the waters at Islington, or Sadler's Wells? Both were excellent revivers. No. Home and quietness were all she asked for; and she sat in the elbow-seat day after day, calm and grave, pondering no doubt with the awe that besets young wives, alternate hopes and tremors.

True to his resolve, Jack turned the new leaf; checked his propensities for drink; played less recklessly; favoured his spouse with delicate attentions from a distance, such as caused Sir Robert to be waggish. 'A whimsical Darby and Joan,' he roared.

'Like the people in the weather-house on the hall chimneypiece, when one was out, t'other was in.' They never spoke to each other, rarely saw each other.

The Minister, who could not endure the sight of my Lady Walpole, rallied his little Whig, and preached on the marital tie. She was too unkind. When Jack drank and swore and gambled away his substance, she was brisk and did not seem to care much, going her ways like the noblest duchess. Now that he was reformed and attentive, and bought nosegays for her, she gazed on him as though he existed not; accepted his gifts like an automaton. If Skerrit were to turn so stony, he, Sir Robert, would fly from her society. She was imprudent, too. What did she mean by encouraging that Scot? Don Quixote was for ever calling to pay his respects. He, Sir Robert, knew what was what, and did not believe that a man and a handsome woman could talk all day about playbooks. And such playbooks! Mr. Wycherley and Mr. Congreve writ a host of pretty comedies which polite ladies listened to in masks. His own old friend Cibber was little more modest than the others in his writings. Not that Sir Robert was a prude—Heaven save the mark!—but he dearly loved his little Whig, and liked his secretary; and could not but perceive that the dallying of the Jacobite was mighty distasteful to Jack.

'Would his worship deign to be jealous?' asked Bab, with a dry laugh. '*Mon Dieu, il ne manquerait que cela!*'

Sir Robert was fain to cease his lecturing. Women indeed are complicated mechanisms. There's no comprehending the darlings.

Barbara was amused to think that Jack was jealous; and that, while he writhed, he dared not vent his wrath. The punishment for bigamy is death. Fancy burly broad-shouldered Jack jumping from the Tyburn ladder! Not an unpleasing spectacle for Barbara, if it were not for the new-forged bond. If she might never learn Humility, she was improved in the practice of Patience; had gained powers of self-control. The visits of Gervas were the bright spots in her dark life; the sound of his low voice was like a rippling rill, lulling to rest; his deep eyes twin wells of truthfulness, to look into which was like a vision of green in a desert. Bab had longed to sit at his feet and learn; and the result of the process was not disappointing. He was the best man, she repeated to herself, that she had ever been privileged to know. For his part, he was never tired of blaming himself for the unjust suspicions of the past. Embittered no doubt, and unduly hard, the actress was; but what a fund of common-sense at bottom, with sly humour glinting now and then like veins of pure metal in a rock. Was Madam Crump in danger? No. When you have under-

gone such ordeals as she, you learn to curb your longings.

Situated as she was, Barbara was safe, and Jack need not have been white-hot and icy-cold with rage and hatred on the frequent arrivals of the Scotchman. When from an upper window he watched with grinding teeth his wife and her friend communing in the garden—her face illumined as it had never been for him—he could with pleasure have plunged a dagger into the breasts of both. This was quite a different sort of thing from the interviews which he had suggested, in which Lord Forfar was to be pumped for Honest Jack's behoof. He might, or might not, be making valuable disclosures; but whatever it was he said, no whiff of it reached the ears of the watcher. All sorts of expedients flitted across his brain. He revolved in his mind as to whether he should pick a quarrel with this serpent on his hearth—cross swords, and slay him—or whether he should consult a body-snatcher. There were hosts of 'em about, who, for a small wage, were ever ready to chip you off an inconvenient rascal who knew too much of your concerns—who, when the deed was done, could make a good bargain with the surgeons, so that naught should tell a tale.

On the whole, it would be best to leave things as they were for the present, promising himself later a full revenge for present heart-aches. Yes. Better wait till that bond was firmly riveted. Afterwards

he could control the actions of his wife. Then he would forbid the house to the importunate fellow; the beggarly servant of the exiled pauper who was drinking himself to death at Rome. But was he still in the service of the exile? Spies rarely told of visits to Dawley now; and yet he sometimes went, and the junta were always civil. 'Twas strange about that search among the papers. Not one compromising scrap! It was impossible that, unless warned, he should have destroyed each tell-tale item. He must have been warned; that much was plain, if all the rest obscure. Should another search be hazarded? Before, he had turned the scrutoire inside out with hands somewhat perfunctory; for, except to please his patron, he cared little to convict the Jacobite. But now—how gladly would he ruin him! What a joy 'twould be to tell cold, scornful, unsmiling Barbara that, thanks to her lord, the man she elected to favour had mounted the fatal steps on Tower Hill! It would be exquisite! Again there were tales buzzing hither and thither of a storm brewing—of some new attempt. Sure my Lord Forfar would be in it? The spies must be set to work—the hounds be unleashed. If any were rash, Lord Forfar would be one of them, judging from what had gone before. Jack must see that in the next wild effort he slipped not through his fingers.

Meanwhile, unconscious of the face convulsed with vague apprehensions that glared from behind a

blind, Bab exchanged thoughts with her friend, and the mutual esteem of both grew vigorous. They discussed the characters of Shakespeare, wrangled pleasantly over Rosalind and Imogen, spoke little of politics; for, as Bab said, with a wan smile, 'We belong to adverse camps, and are both too stubborn for conversion.'

As time progressed, it became more and more doubtful, to the despair of the patentees, and Sir Robert's concern, whether, after all, she would be able to resume her labours. The Monimias and Alicias of the poets take much out of the system, and the vitality of the actress seemed to wane rather than increase. She, once so full of energy and life, became listless—hard to move; and Jack was grievously annoyed anent the physical condition of the golden goose. He would take her away to Bristol hot wells, or to the Bath—anywhere to revive her strength, in order that, after the interesting event, she might be able to don the harness.

'Never mind appearances,' he assured the patentees, with a superb wave, suggestive of marital authority. 'She shall act. I pass my word for it;' and those gentlemen retired reassured. Not but that qualms invaded his mind. Pray Heaven there would be no accident! When all had gone so well till now, 'twould be woundily unfair. What if that Scot, who was always in her pocket, were to worm the secret from her? Tush! He, Crump, despite

his breadth of beam, was losing tone, and waxing nervous like a girl. Reaction, doubtless, after those undue potations and late hours. Both would go and take the waters. Happy idea, to be acted on at once! But then the promise—which inwardly he swore to break so soon as the bond was riveted—that the two were never to be left together! Absurd! A sick woman's whimsy. One that must needs be respected, however—at least, for the present. If only he could oust that Scotchman, he thought he could be content. And yet, not so; for now that, aware he had no legal hold over her, she could depart when she listed, Jack began to feel quite enamoured of his wife again. She was so cool and independent; did just as fancy suggested, so certain of not being thwarted by her lord, that, so soon as typhus did its work, and removed the obstacle, he was prepared to tie the knot in real earnest, if only to tame her stubbornness.

And she, as the leaves under whose shade she sat in day-dreams turned to red and yellow and rustled down, thought much on the same subject. What was her future to be like? Was Destiny weary yet, or not, of pursuing her favourite victim? Were not fresh toys to shatter coming into the world each day—new, bright, comely, unbattered toys that were more worth breaking than a woman, world-worn and weary? Had Jack, as he threatened, returned the maniac to St. Luke's — hot-bed of

malignant fever? If he were to come to her some day, and, announcing that the lunatic was dead, propose to go to church again, would she accept? Knowing what she knew, how could she? Yes, she would; and she marvelled at herself for so deciding, wondering at the mysteries of maternity. And it seemed quite possible that, if opportunity offered, he might act in some such manner, so uncertain in his moods was Honest Jack. Had not Sir Robert laughed at the delicate attentions of his secretary, not knowing that 'twas in fear of his master that he was thus attentive? Sir Robert was a weapon wherewithal he might be whipped at any time. To wrest this from her grasp, he was capable of a genuine marriage, supposing the barrier removed. And she actually would take him! Could she ever, in the rolling years, forgive his treachery? The leopard may not change his spots. His character could no more change than his eyes grow closer together. If he were good to his child, she might forgive the past; but really like him—never!

Sir Robert, renewing the intimacy of old days, frequently rode over to chat with his little Whig, and pour forth the budget of his troubles; and it did her good to mark his stout figure trotting up the drive, or walking with the bridle over his arm; for, in listening to him, she forgot her own sorrows. Of course, the flying rumours of a new plot hatching reached her ears, and she implored him to be wary.

'You know,' she said fondly, 'that my health is far from what it used to be. I've neither strength nor spirits now to play the chambermaid, and rescue your worship from the toils. Such danger as may be apprehended from the Jacobites must arise from their extreme folly. When men grow desperate they become fanatics, and oftentimes succeed out of sheer rashness.'

To which Sir Robert grumblingly replied:

'You ought to know, since you are so friendly with the vermin.'

This annoyed Bab, though she knew he was but half in earnest. He looked upon Gervas as a poor feckless creature—a tool in designing hands; and deemed it a blemish in her understanding that she could like Lord Forfar's society.

'I will not hear anything against him!' she cried, with a little stamp that pleasantly recalled her former self. 'He is sincere and conscientious, as I wish others were; and in his heart cares no more for James, who is conspicuously neither, than you or I.'

'Indeed! gibed Sir Robert; 'perhaps the Westminster Hall absurdity was not his doing?'

'Maybe,' retorted Bab. 'But I know he's sick of scheming. Last time he came here he was complaining of his ancient comrades. Talkers and tipplers, he said they were. People scrambling for crumbs, who cared not from whose table they were thrown. Does

that look as if he were still conspiring? No, no. Keep your eyes on Bolingbroke and Pulteney. 'Tis from them, not him, believe me, that future menace comes.'

'Tis you who are deceived,' Walpole asserted, with characteristic doggedness. 'Is it likely that, knowing how staunch a little Whig you are, he would take you into his confidence? Your husband says he's active still, and wants to make a fool of you, as he did of Mrs. Vinegar.'

The which remark vexed Bab exceedingly, for 'twas as painful to have her single-minded hero accused of trickery as to hear herself compared to odious Pamela. Thus annoyed, she spoke with a tinge of acerbity, declaring that one who cared not for pelf or worldly dignities must needs be a riddle to the champion of bribery; and that her husband ought to be ashamed of himself for making accusations which 'twould be impossible to prove. The wish was father to the thought, no doubt, as regarded the cooled ardour of Gervas. Esteeming him as she did, 'twas with a shudder that she thought of a traitor's punishment. The doom of a highwayman, hanged by the neck in chains and ribbons, and adorned with posies, was too simple and too familiar to everyone not to have lost half its terrors. But the penalty for treason! 'To be drawn to the place of execution, hanged till half dead, and then revived; then, the bowels being

burnt before the face, the head to be severed, the body divided into quarters and disposed where the King thought fit.' Had not Bab often looked with pity at the tarred heads of Layer and other martyrs of 1715 on the top of London Bridge, who underwent that awful sentence? That of Layer fell off its spike while she was living in the Close, and lay in the road, a blackened ball, for several days, till some one thought fit to put it back again. Gervas might claim his peerage, and possibly escape the more shocking details; but what would her feelings be if ever his head were to grace Temple Bar or Traitor's Gate at Southwark? Though political controversy was by tacit agreement tabooed between them, Bab hailed with joy the pregnant remarks that dropped from Lord Forfar; such remarks, suggested by doubt and dejection and disgust, as used to fill her sister with dismay.

But Sir Robert soon had other things to discuss, more grave than Jacobite misdemeanours. The King had been so long coming, and had so frequently put off the journey, that Queen and Minister were harassed and worn to the bone. There had been a general pacification abroad, which deprived his Majesty of an excuse for remaining on the Continent. He is going mad, reluctantly acknowledged Caroline; for sure never did monarch so deliberately hack his own throat. The people now openly said, 'Let him stay away; for the Regency, at least, is

decent, which his Majesty never is.' Walpole wrote that he and the Queen were agreed, since his Majesty would not deign to occupy himself with the subject, to put down the standing army, to disband the expensive soldiery, break up the Hyde Park camp. The answer came: 'Wait till my return.' Wait! As if all were not weary of waiting. The Hyde Park camp was becoming a scandal, for the soldiers had nothing to do, and, as the Dawleyites had been sharp enough to foresee, they were—despite red coats, and Hanover horses on caps, and pipe-clayed leggings—but a lawless horde of marauders. Complaints were pouring in from all sides of the conduct of the military footpads, who were a terror to respectable households, and had turned the recreation-ground of the people into a species of minor Alsatia. Would Sir Robert be good enough to smoke this wasp's nest, purge this den of robbers? No one more anxious so to do than the Minister, who had constructed a monster that threatened to eat him up. But in face of the King's express command he knew not how to act. Difficult enough to manage at home, out of the range of personal influence he was becoming hopelessly intractable. It was with an intense feeling of relief, therefore, that he received at length the mandate to send the yachts to Holland. The Queen shared his feelings, though she knew that the advent of her lord and master implied a return from liberty and personal ease to

constraint and slavery. She was too well aware that instead of receiving homage she would have to pay it, that instead of people striving to please her, she would have to try and please the tyrant without success. And yet she desired his coming. A courier arrived with the welcome news that the King had turned his back on Herrenhausen; another stated that he had embarked at Helvoetsluys. Everybody examined the weathercocks, talked of tides and winds and moons, and, as the hours passed, grew gloomy. The Dawleyites could scarce believe their senses. Even Gervas was startled. Could it be that Fate, tired of the procrastination of the Jacobites, was taking the matter in hand upon her own account?

A terrible storm arose and swept the Channel for four days, during which there were no tidings of his Majesty. A hundred messages a day passed 'twixt St. James's and the Admiralty; wagers were freely laid; the faces of weather-beaten admirals grew longer, for they believed that the King had perished. As might have been expected, the Prince of Wales did not neglect his opportunity. While the people were full of surprise and consternation, the Queen in agonies of alternate hope and fear, he gave a grand dinner-party, a gala feast to which my Lord Mayor and Aldermen were bidden; to which they dared not refuse to go, lest haply he who was the Prince should in reality be their

sovereign. 'Was this more of Bolingbroke's diabolical advice?' groaned Walpole. 'Was Frederick bent on dragging down the throne which was his birthright?' Sir Robert needed all the sympathy that could be bestowed on him, and both Mr. and Mrs. Crump perceived that the situation was indeed a grave one. The elements and the Heir-apparent were doing King James's work. If George was really at the bottom among the fishes, the conduct of Frederick was so grossly indecent that there would be a general outcry against him.

'Poor Queen!' ejaculated the Minister, a prey to direst dumps; 'she stands 'twixt the Scylla and Charybdis of falling into the hands of an unnatural son, or of receiving a husband whom she hath as much cause to dislike; and her health failing, too! What will become of this divided family and this divided country? 'Tis too melancholic a prospect for conjecture to be allowed to paint it!'

Caroline saw the situation in all its blackness, and leaned for support upon her faithful Ranulph. She was rigidly resolved to betray no disquiet, entering the public drawing-room as usual, and making polite speeches to curtseying duchesses, who admired her iron courage. But once in her own apartments, 'twas as much as she could do not to break down. Her lips trembled over cribbage and quadrille; and the Honourable Pamela, who slept in the adjoining chamber, was aware of sobbing in the night.

Sometimes the royal bed seemed turned into a red-hot gridiron; and, donning a dressing-gown, the Queen would call over the stairs to her Vice-Chamberlain, and pace the chamber till morning.

Mrs. Belfield of course bore her share in the suspense of these trying days. What if the elements were warring for the Jacobite cause? An exasperating world! 'Twas a mercy, in any case, to be free of that puling Scottish nincompoop, for, even were James to come prancing in, my Lord Forfar would be no gainer. And yet, what anguish must needs o'erflow a certain virgin bosom if she were compelled some day to gaze on a certain triumphal cavalcade wherein a Stuart was bobbing to right and left, with no smirking duchess behind! Sifting events, she could give herself no blame. That was some little comfort. She could not be expected to foresee a storm in the Channel. How much have the winds and waves to answer for in British history, from the luckless foundering of the *White Ship* with English hopes aboard till now! But for the wind would not Elizabeth have roosted in some tree like Charles, instead of grinning and ogling at Tilbury? Though she might not blame herself, the Honourable Pamela felt injured. But, in imitation of her mistress Caroline, she resolved to be a sensible woman, and conceal emotions.

It was too late now to think of coquetting with Dawley. If the family must go she must go also,

and make the best of a bad job. She shivered to think of what might happen, remembered about Henrietta Maria, and what she suffered in her garret. If the Queen had suffered, what must her ladies have endured? Come what might, she would not perish in a garret. The very next morning at breakfast she would pump Medlicote as to his financial arrangements. That he was rich was notorious. He could not be such a dolt as not to have invested something in foreign securities, seeing how unstable was the *régime* to which he had bound himself. Perhaps there was yet time to take further advantageous precautions. If things were to come right after all, he would not make so bad a husband, for the Queen treated him like a younger brother; could not get on without her Ranulph, or bear him out of sight. Sure things would right themselves, for hath it not been long established that the wicked flourish in this world, and we must admit for the Honourable Pamela that she laid no claim to holiness.

The suspense became intolerable. Blithe Fred flew to his mamma with news that guns had been heard booming through the storm; signals of distress from the fleet that accompanied his Majesty. Wiseacres swore that in such a tempest, lasting four days and nights, 'twas impossible a ship could live.

'What will you do if Fred is King?' asked Caroline of her youngest daughter.

'Run out of the house *au grand galop*,' promptly replied that maiden.

The Queen smiled drearily, for such would be the inspiration of her own instinct.

One evening as the gloomy circle sat at play, there was a stir in the anteroom, a messenger in dirty boots flew in, and gushing Pamela, perceiving that all was right, fell, wildly shrieking, into his arms, as by incontrollable impulse.

The King had never stirred from Helvoetsluys, and, being a bad sailor, was not certain when he would. How much unnecessary wear and tear of heart-strings and idle misgivings! Pamela flung herself in hysterics at the Queen's feet, refusing to be picked up by anyone but Ranulph, and whispering in his ear, as she clung to him, that she never could command her feelings—never, never—laughing and crying by turns—excusing herself as a poor, silly, artless thing to the company, whose chaste breast was fluttering with joy in that the dear King was safe. Whether he had been washed overboard, and rescued by an angel from heaven or a Newfoundland dog, she declared herself too flustered to comprehend. Sufficient that he was safe—O joy! O rapture!—but she certainly could never forget her anxiety—never—never—never!

The Queen turned white, and muttered that she knew he had not embarked—a blunt falsehood that did her credit—and revenged herself on Fred by

instantly despatching to him the messenger. As for Pamela's little comedy, she took no heed of it, but turned on Ranulph a look of sly reproach in that he should be hoodwinked by such clumsy artifice. He laughed, for he was not taken in. He knew Pamela for what she was, but thought none the less that she would do well at the head of a table to preside now and then with *éclat* over county magnates, and be no unfitting worldly spouse to a wealthy dabbler in politics.

Pamela's comedy was so pretty that 'twould well bear repetition. Tidings came that the King was in the act of starting. Then arose another storm, to which the first was child's play. A sloop reached land with the awful intelligence that in the tempest the royal yacht had tacked about and vanished into darkness. This time it had really foundered, everybody was convinced. Four men-of-war, dismasted, scrambled into different harbours.

This news was kept back as long as possible, while the Queen sat persistently at cribbage; but at length Sir Robert went to her with heavy heart, and said that hope was over. The verdict coming from his lips, Caroline endeavoured no longer to constrain herself, but gave full loose to tears, while courtiers whispered in the corridors and stole off a-tiptoe to bow in the saloons of Frederick.

The hubbub and excitement was general, and wise men of all opinions shook their periwigs. The situa-

tion was grave, had never been graver since James II. fled away by night.

Where was the Pretender now? Riding post-haste across the Continent? Concealed already perhaps at Dawley, dressing to strut forth and show himself!

'Twas a notable fact that though all classes shared in the excitement, nobody cared for George. 'Twas dread of internal commotions that lengthened men's visages. When such an one inquired, 'How goes the wind for the King?' the reply was always the same, 'Against him, like the nation.'

Caroline, glancing from a window, beheld an ominous vision; no less a sight than that of a splendidly attired man, with red morocco shoes and diamond buckles, staring up with a smirk as he sucked his clouded cane.

My Lord Bolingbroke! He dared to emerge from his retreat and grin in the Queen's face as she took the air at her casement. Things must be bad, indeed, for the House of Hanover ere he presumed on such a piece of insolence. Even from amongst the military footpads who were by way of protecting the throne came savours of sedition. One of them had openly proposed the toast, 'Here is damnation to our master,' without being instantly struck down.

Bluestring had need of all his belief in himself, Pamela of such resignation as she could counterfeit, to bear up during the long-drawn perplexity.

The storm abated, but the little turkey-cock did not strut up the stair. Another messenger! His Majesty had been grievously sick, but was returned to Helvoetsluys to wait for finer weather.

The Queen owned that never in her life had she sat upon such coals. But as she did not wish to be favoured with Pamela's performances, she retired to her sanctum and penned a dutiful epistle. Quickly came the reply:

'Malgré tout ce qui j'ai souffert, ma chère Caroline, en etant malade à un point que je ne croyais pas que le corps humain pourrait souffrir, je vous jure que je m'exposerois encore et encore pour avoir le plaisir d'ententre les marques de votre tendresse que cette situation m'a procuré.'

Was this the outburst of a young sailor to his love?

'*Quel galimatias!*' laughed Caroline, handing the effusion to Sir Robert. 'Don't think I'm an old fool and vain of my charms at this time of day, that I show you this!'

For all that she frowned at her trusty ally when he answered, chuckling:

'Methinks it was intended for the Walmoden!'

Now 'twas Fred's turn to show anxiety, and for the courtiers to run back to St. James's as quick as possible. Cincinnatus left the beloved Mall, and returning to his haycock, poured forth his bile upon his colleagues. 'If the winds and waves have been

playing tricks with us,' he explained amid unanimous approval, 'yet have we been enabled to perceive that the country is ready for a change. Was there a soul, except those tied by interest, who were pleased at the wretch's safety? No! Did not all agree that 'twould have been better if he had perished, and the common sailors spared who were swept from the decks into the billows? The army is ripe for revolt. Thousands of lukewarm Hanoverians would be too glad of the chance of turning. Nay! even the abominable Bluestring himself would be pleased to bend his gouty knees if such a thing might be allowed, for than his position naught can be more ghastly.' My Lord Bolingbroke exaggerated, as picturesque orators will; but, in sooth, Sir Robert's path grew more rugged every hour. Ranulph Medlicote was loyalty itself, but it was not quite gratifying to an old and faithful servant to see a young man who, if he had parts, was foppish, so constantly preferred to himself; while as for the King's return, it implied pins in his seat as well as the Queen's. For was not the tyrant certain to begin his jeremiad again; to praise everything German at the expense of everything English? Did he not look on his servants as pieces of furniture, grumbling at the price he had to pay for them as he might at a joiner's bill?

When it became generally known that his Majesty had absolutely arrived at Lowestoft, a council of war

was held at Dawley—a secret Vehmgericht from which Gervas was absent—to decide on a plan of operations. No further time must be lost. It must be now or never; for the first effort of Bluestring's personal influence would be anent the military footpads, and, as we have already seen, the keystone of the Dawley arch was the camp established in the Park.

So soon as he beheld in the flesh the rubicund gills and goggling fishy eyes of his master, Walpole was himself again. He cantered cheerily to Kensington to brighten the little Whig, for though she had been a great comfort during the suspense, hearkening intently to all he had to say, buttressing his courage, whispering sage words, fanning the ashes of his hopes, he was concerned to see how faded she was looking.

To cheer her he spoke of the Dawley Vehmgericht, of which his spies had duly kept him informed, and mentioned that my Lord Forfar was conspicuously absent, a fact which made Honest Jack look chapfallen, for he was sorry to know that it was true. She was near her time, and spent many hours wrapped in warm cloaks under the favourite tree from which the leaves had fallen. Vainly did Jack's solicitude point out the folly of the proceeding. Could she not read his motive?

'Let me alone,' she curtly answered, with a grim smile; and he was fain to slink away, since he

dared not provoke the slumbering devil in her eye.

The Minister purred and chatted, and seeing how tired Bab looked, pressed her hand and departed, taking Jack with him to attend to some urgent business. They had barely reached the Hercules Pillars, and were discoursing there of the camp, whose huts from this point were trimly exposed to view in long lines forming a square, from whose centre floated aloft the Royal Standard, when a groom came clattering after. Madam Crump wished to see Sir Robert Walpole at once and alone: 'twas urgent. He had brought a fresh hack, since not a moment might be lost. Walpole stared; Honest Jack turned green. Could she, at the last moment, have made up her mind to blab? It took all the secretary's facial discipline to maintain the impassible aspect of meekness which was habitual in his master's presence.

'Alone! What can she require?' Sir Robert marvelled. 'Is it another Golden Rump?' then added with a slap on his companion's shoulder, and a loud laugh: 'Nay! cheer up! 'Tis no elopement, although it looks suspicious. Don't tell Skerrit, you dog, or I shall never hear the last of it. Wait for me at Medlicote's. Alone? At once? The scribblers must be at it again. What can the hussy want?'

Racked with anxiety, Jack obeyed, and wistfully watched the Minister as he galloped out of sight.

Could she have told Gervas; and was she acting on his counsel? Judging others by himself, he supposed that the hatred was mutual between himself and my Lord Forfar. What a pity that he was out of this last effort! What a pity! Jack would have gladly given half his worldly possessions, half of the years that yet remained to him of youth, to have the Scotchman in his power.

Sir Robert was surprised to perceive a hectic flush on the wan face of Barbara, a trembling agitation that shook her frame, as, pointing with a thin hand, she bade him sit.

'You are in grievous peril,' she panted, with short breath. 'A chasm yawns for you. Thank God that *he* hath naught to do with it! Thank God at least for that!'

She wiped the moisture from her lips, and lay back gasping.

'Be calm, my Barbara,' whispered Sir Robert, with an affectionate pressure of the fingers that he held. 'Be calm, child, or we shall have you flitting. What is this? You have been sleeping in the chill air and dreaming.'

'Not so,' murmured Barbara, rallying her strength. ''Tis said that our sins come back to roost. So do our good acts, or how could we consent to live? You had not been gone more than a few moments when I was alarmed by a rustle in the bushes, and was about to call for help, for 'tis lonely here, when

I was aware of a glint of cross-belts and the white horse. A guardsman! I never feared the guards, poor ill-used fellows! though some have a bad name.'

'You love a red coat, like all the sex,' Sir Robert laughed; 'and they love you. Do you remember how surprised I was when the sentries presented arms to you?'

'Aye! and so do they remember, poor grateful souls!' Bab muttered. 'Alack! dear friend, you've much to answer for! 'Twas one of the very men whom I had benefited. Emerging from the evergreens he motioned silence, and advanced with uncouth salutations.

'"Gentle mistress," he said softly, "methinks you're on the wing. Would you do a good action, ere you go? You who had bowels for the soldiers, when none else pitied them."

'"Speak on!" I said, seeing that he hesitated.

'"'Tis this way," he replied, groping for his words. '"Me and my mates have been tampered with, that's what it is. Though 'tis but small matter to such as I, who wears the crown, I don't like pirate's knavery. A straight shot and I'm your man; but gags and blindfolding is disgusting to a Briton. I've often seen you two together, and so I thought I'd just let you know of it; for I can't speak myself without peaching on my fellows. Give me your word of honour that none of the guards shall suffer, and I'll

pitch you the whole yarn." And then, Sir Robert, he told me this, and I thanked Heaven that before I go I may stop this dreadful crime.'

As by gasps, pausing awhile in her extreme agitation, Bab told the soldier's story, Sir Robert's jaw dropped, and he stared aghast at the apparent proximity of the peril. Here was a coil, indeed! Was the egg near hatching? No time must be lost in addling it.

The conspirators, the soldier informed Madam Crump, had spared no trouble in inveigling unprincipled persons in the army to forswear allegiance to George. Men of resolution were wanted, and had been found, who would not shrink from the seizing of great men. Here was a state of things, suddenly disclosed, to which the Barbadoes affair was nothing. A cloud was descending upon England of rapine, plunder, murder—suspension of civil rights —a carnival of bloodshed!

Stooping reverently over the sick woman, Sir Robert kissed her brow.

'My girl, how strangely doth Heaven order events, and choose its instruments! Once you saved me from captivity—perhaps death. Now you've saved a kingdom. Some day we'll ferret out this soldier, and make a man of him. Cheer thee, for my sake, Bab; for in sooth I love thee, lass!'

Tears were coursing down the face of the bluff Minister, and he kissed his favourite again and

rode away. Barbara smiled and sighed. When you are aweary of the world, and feel a log, 'tis reviving to discover that you've not lost your usefulness.

CHAPTER VIII.

'COUNTING THE CHICKENS.'

THAT anything untoward should happen to Honest Jack will doubtless cause distress to his many admirers. Our excellent young friend entered on a period of worry. The guardsman's narrative disclosed a state of things which required the immediate attention of Ministers; and Mr. Crump found himself journeying from St. James's to the Park, from thence to the Tower and back again, a dozen times a day. 'One might as well be a running footman,' he declared, in discontent; but did not relax his energies for all that. The security of number one was closely involved in that of the powers that were, and 'twas evident that this time they were seriously threatened.

Every evil contains a grain of good if we can only find it (we are told so, at all events); and Honest Jack realized with complacency that all the hubbub and

scurrying of messengers was due to the counsel of his wife. As the gravity of the situation became more apparent, so also did the debt of gratitude increase which was due from King and Government to that young lady. Hence, on the whole, he was rather inclined to magnify the peril, in order to claim in the future a substantial reward; and hugged himself with beatitude in the possession of so auriferous a fowl.

As he bustled about, sometimes a-horseback, sometimes in a hired chair, he turned over in his mind the nature of the reward that should be claimed. All things considered, he did not see why Madam Crump should not blossom into an important personage. A theatrical salary was all very well in its way, but there might be larger fish to be caught. A sum of money, or a comfortable place with plentiful emoluments, would be acceptable to himself. Certainly the latter, since ready cash was not just at present the strong point of Government. The system of bribery had drained the coffers. To his wife a post at Court. Admirable idea! What a vista of possibilities did it not disclose! She wanted ballast, did Barbara; was clever enough to push her own fortunes and her husband's to the highest of pinnacles if properly guided. Why, Abigail Hill began from as small beginnings as Madam Crump; and did she not rule St. James's?

The King, since his return, had fallen back under the influence of the Queen. In old days, her

Majesty was partial to Mrs. Philpot. Sobered, no longer skittish as of yore, Barbara would, little by little, obtain influence over Caroline. In the not far-distant future, the King would be governed by the Queen; the Queen by the new favourite, who, being a dear friend of the Prime Minister's, could work with him in double harness for the common advantage of all.

The more he turned over and scrutinized the idea, the more perfect did it seem; and Mr. Crump decided finally that Madam Crump must not be an actress, but a full-blown lady of quality. A fortune —perhaps a peerage. Or no—why not Parliamentary honours?

Mr. Crump surveyed in his mind's eye the map of England with a view to deciding which constituency he should honour. Some day he might aspire to the blue ribbon—even attain to the lofty and influential position of Sir Robert Walpole himself! Why not? If somewhat ignorant, he was far from stupid. A fairy palace delighted his vision, crocus-hued, prismatic. But what about that malignant female at St. Luke's? Was she dead yet? Had she caught the fever? 'Twould be politic to make of the golden goose an honest woman and a real wife. Vexatious maniac, to linger importunately in a world which she could not enjoy, and which did not want her! Not that it mattered much, for a secure bond would soon be riveted, and the cold,

haughty lady at Kensington be reduced to fitting vassalage.

Difficulties arise in the least-expected quarters, which make of no effect, sometimes, the best-laid plans. Again the Dawleyites had reason to pause, wondering whether their work was to be done for them. His Majesty, besides being desperately sea-sick, caught on his homeward voyage a chill, which developed into a great cold, with inflammation. He was very ill, and Caroline broke down under the strain of anxieties so various and prolonged. Again the courtiers ran to Norfolk House, and cringed to the rising sun. The Princesses openly expressed their horror at their brother's conduct during the crisis. The royal family was distracted by internal broils. The King lay apparently a-dying; the Queen wept, cursing the hour of Fred's birth; his sisters hoped he would drop down of an apoplexy. There seemed little need of any plot on the part of Bolingbroke or Pulteney. The pretty plan of Honest Jack seemed like to fall to pieces. Would the King die, or would he live? While busily engaged in scanning events within the circle of St. James's, a blow fell on the fairy palace that his imagination was erecting from another quarter, which laid it level with the ground.

Perhaps in consequence of sudden agitation, perhaps from causes due to a constitution strained, Barbara found herself at the same moment a

mother and bereaved. Her babe, on whose existence so many brilliant complications hung, was born dead, and she lay delirious for days. When she came to herself, Charlotte sat watching in the dimly-lighted room, and she almost imagined that they were in Montagu Close again; that all which had since happened was a dream. Yet she soon perceived that it was not so. Sir Charles, instead of the well-remembered tawdry coat frayed at the seams, wore a neat cloth suit of studied simplicity. There were no discoloured cracks on wall or ceiling. 'Twas a bright chamber, cosily curtained and carpeted. The scene in Bedlam had been sober fact; no freak of distempered fancy. Sir Robert, in spite of his many causes for solicitude, came frequently to inquire after the invalid—so did my Lord Forfar; and when the two met upon the threshold, they touched the hat, and clicked the heels, as the way was, but exchanged no greeting. Gervas looked on the pursy Minister as the incarnation of wickedness; the deliberate tempter of weak mortals to their ruin. Sir Robert could not be expected to forget his injuries. With his cynical convictions anent the baseness of humanity, he was little likely to understand the *rara avis* who contemned modish vices, and despised those who pursued them, and who could yet be on his own side so curiously unscrupulous.

Oh, consider the lacerated feelings of Honest

Jack at this mischievous stroke of fortune! When informed of the unexpected blighting of his little plan, he sat for a while speechless and livid—numb and bereft of motion. No amount of blaspheming, no rapping out of ingenious expletives, could rise to the level of this dismal catastrophe. Where was the bond now? What would happen next? He dared not show himself to his spouse, dreading to hear from her cold lips some gruesome verdict. Had she not said, in decided cutting tones that bore truth in their icy accents, that for one reason only she was content to hold her tongue?

At one moment, Mr. Crump congratulated himself on her continued silence; at another, felt rashly impelled to rush into the darkened chamber and learn his fate. When nobody was by, he crept up to the door, and listened; peered through the key-hole on the sphynx-woman in the bed, striving to read her intentions in her attitude. Was she brooding over vengeance, tardy but thorough? or was she indifferent? Would she succumb? follow her babe across the murky frontier? He almost hoped she would; for even the loss of the golden goose would be better than betrayal. At such a moment, too! Peradventure if she died without divulging, the grieving Minister would, for the sake of the departed, transfer the load of gratitude to the sorrowing widower? As half a loaf is notoriously to be preferred to no bread at all, so would exiguous

patronage be better than none. Worse than none—detection and disgrace!

'Twas bitter to gaze upon that sphynx-woman—or as much of her as could be descried through the small aperture—lying there as day followed day. What could she be thinking of—what revolving? Her continued silence frightened Honest Jack. What a soul-disturbing condition of affairs it was! The King's illness and the threatened action of the enemy required that Mr. Crump should be at his post by the side of the Minister. More than once he determined to throw up his duties and stay at home, for was it not too awful to have, as it were, a red-hot brand upon his floor, which might burn his house and goods ere he returned at night? Might she not be settling something diabolical, such as should sweep away at a puff all his worldly prospects? Whether the malignant lunatic succumbed or not was of small importance now, for the bond being broken instead of riveted, she would certainly refuse his hand, if, in genuine earnestness, he were to offer it. Yet, undeniably clever in some things, while amazingly the reverse in others, sure she must be amenable to reason. She would see the advantage of dwelling in the fairy palace if its prisms were invitingly shaken, so as to display the fascinating colours of their facets. What could she gain by exposure now? Did he not remember how, in days of poverty, she had disliked her cotton gowns and

pined for the pleasures of wealth? Because you have been bruised and buffeted, is that a reason for being averse to sugar-plums? On the contrary, when the romance of life is shown to be a sham, its ambitions and aspirations delusion, may we not be expected to cling with closer tenacity to its tangible and material comforts? Jack felt that he would give much to know Bab's views as to her bereavement. Would she look on it as a relief or fresh misfortune? He itched to step upstairs and ask her —started sometimes on the errand, but shrank back ere he reached the door, for was not that tongue of hers as sharp and pointed as a rapier? The bond being shattered, what, when she did speak, might she say or threaten? He almost persuaded himself that she would surely be reasonable, accept things as they were, although the child had perished; but then, had she not shown herself on various occasions egregiously and horribly careless of consequences, so long as the whim of the moment was gratified? Had she not tilted at windmills, knowing in her heart of hearts that she must be unhorsed at last? The motive for silence being gone, might she not find a fiendish pleasure in immolating herself, provided that Jack were involved in the catastrophe? And then a new and horrid gleam struck the unhappy man like a lightning-flash. All those months of communing under the trees; those frequent visits which brought brightness to her face. He was sure

that she liked that abominable Scotchman, suspected strongly that his liking for her was warmer than it should be, or why so radiant a countenance? Of course the abominable Scot must be enamoured of Madam Crump. Had not he, Crump, frequently run after other men's wives, and found a piquant pleasure in the pastime which was not to be found in the pursuit of the unwedded? What was there now to prevent her from going off with the Scotchman? 'Twas some such intention, no doubt, which kept her so unnaturally quiet. She was revolving ways and means; would denounce him, Jack, out of sheer spite, and whisk away in a twinkling. In his dilemma Mr. Crump felt half inclined to suggest a compromise. He would give his consent to an elopement if she would hold her peace about the past. Alas for Honest Jack, that so sorry a remnant of his palace should remain to him! A wide gulf between this and the scheme for power at Court, which a few days ago he considered as almost realized.

Like many another schemer, Jack gave his wife credit for his own attributes of fertility and nimbleness. As she reclined on her couch, she was simply oppressed with a feeling that the act of breathing was unnecessary labour. What was there to live for, hope, desire? Nothing. 'Twas best for the young life to have withered. Are not all babes snatched away thus to be sincerely envied, in that

they evade a pilgrimage which is satisfying to so few? How comes it, pondered the stricken mother, that some souls are privileged only to peep at the world, as it were; to be withdrawn and passed on to another sphere before their white robe is dabbled with slime—temptation, pain, disillusion, disappointment? Lucky souls! Why are we not all as lucky? Are they to be judged eventually by a different standard from ourselves, or is it a reward for having done well in a former life? If all children who pass thus are to move with so little trouble to the next stage, how hard does it appear to be upon us who bear the brunt and burden of the day! In Ceylon they believe so much in omens that many babes are deliberately slain, to save them from predestined misery.

This particular babe of Barbara's was, in her opinion, particularly to be envied; for might it not have developed, in growing up, its father's qualities? Then would it have been a bane to itself as well as others. What must Eve's feelings have been when Cain slew Abel? At the thought, Bab shuddered and was thankful. The bereavement was a matter for rejoicing; of that the young mother was convinced, though she was the more alone. When you have suffered much 'tis natural to wish for a loved object to escape from similar suffering. Hence when the nurse told her that her child was dead, Bab only sighed softly without tears. 'Twas the hired nurse

who wept; for 'tis a sad spectacle to see one who is young with the attributes of youth crushed out. 'Twas a fine chance for a display of patience, in which wayward Barbara was becoming quite an adept. For forty years or more, probably, since her constitution was a good one, she would have to drag her chain. What a prospect! How to occupy the tedious interval?

'An unnatural, unearthly being am I,' she mused, 'only half human now—a sexless, heartless creature —I who so pined for love!'

Charlotte, who spent as much time as she could spare at Kensington, exerted her affectionate instincts to dispel the unhealthy listlessness of the dear invalid, and after a while in some sort succeeded. She recited scraps of plays, crooned ditties in an undertone, which she had picked up in her wanderings, and which by their quaintness arrested the attention, and brought now and then a smile to the worn face; procured some puppets, and performed the touching entertainment of 'Hero and Leander' upon the coverlet, varied with the merry conceits of Punch and Nebuchadnezzar. When utterly desolate, the wagging of a dog's tail brings a certain consolation as the expression of a humble sympathy; and Barbara, only half-listening to Charlotte's jargon, and watching the ungainly movements of the dolls, felt the hazy interest of a sick child, and looked forward daily to her coming.

Sir Charles was full of the strange adventures of a stroller's life, and Bab, when she was gone, would ponder over Charlotte, while reviewing her singular career. For the present the invalid was not strong enough to consider important matters, and Honest Jack gave himself unnecessary scourgings. She eagerly inquired of Sir Robert, on the first occasion of his admittance to the sick chamber, what was transpiring out of doors, and sank back relieved to hear that his Majesty was better, and that measures were being adopted to thwart the plots of the enemy. The Minister displayed a paternal interest in the patient, observing with gentle tact that he could never pay the debt which he owed to his little Whig; that she doubtless felt a gap in her being which her friends must try to fill; that she must always remember how useful she had been, and would surely be again.

Their Majesties, who were aware of the source whence invaluable information had been obtained, were full of sorrow for her trouble, anxious to assure her in person of a benignant interest. Indeed, the Queen had sent through him a special mandate to appear again at St. James's so soon as her health permitted. Of course Honest Jack, who ventured into the chamber with his patron, was enchanted, until he beheld the invalid sadly shaking her head. Whilst fully grateful to their Majesties, she humbly begged permission to decline. She was firmly re-

solved to return to her duties with the opening season, and felt sure that their Majesties would understand that a true artist needed all her time to devote to the study of her art.

'Tis the only thing that can take me out of myself,' she said, with a cold glance at Jack, who winced. 'I blush to think how unfairly earned were my early laurels. My remaining years of life shall be devoted to the service of the public.'

Sir Robert approved. Whilst ready and anxious to push his pet's fortune in whichever direction she might desire, he appreciated her independence as a rare and noteworthy curiosity, like a two-headed cow or a black tulip ; and was pleased to nod and pat her shoulder when, as frequently became the case, he found her deep over her playbooks. Lord Forfar for some reason did not come so frequently as before, and on the whole she was not sorry. 'Twas a satisfaction to know that he was no longer involved in the Jacobite tomfoolery. Sir Robert's remonstrances on the subject of his frequent visits, if due to consideration respecting himself, had been wise, and she as wanting as usual in mundane circumspection. Safe as she might feel herself to be, it was no doubt better to avoid playing with fire. Self-examination in the quiet of the sick-chamber told her this. Moreover, she was about to gather up lapsed threads, and must give exclusive attention to her *rentrée* at Drury Lane.

After what had happened at Bedlam she had taken a horror of Ophelia, and had now chosen Alicia for her new *début*, an arduous and long-winded part which would engross all her time and energies for the present, if the actress was to make the predetermined hit and electrify the expectant critics. Jack began to congratulate himself upon the clearing up of the weather. More than ever must she be humoured now. If she preferred hard work behind the lights to dallying in the royal ante-chamber, she must even have her way. From this point of view 'twas well to let matters drift, with humble oblations and prayers to the perverse and crossgrained three; the which offerings were apparently accepted in good part, for in the course of diurnal journeys he was delivered of another project.

What a zany was he not to have thought of it before! Beyond his own admission, wrung from him by surprise when they twain were alone together, what was there to prove that the maniac was his real wife? Why not brazen it out and explain bluntly to the disdainful one that 'twas all an error? Well-timed generosity would shut the mouths of the people at St. Luke's as to who had placed the woman there. And yet this last was but a will-o'-the-wisp that he was following; for 'twould never do to face *esclandre*. All scandal of inquiry was to be deprecated; not but what it

might be advantageous to sow cunning doubts in the lady's mind, such as should undermine inconvenient resolutions. That Gervas's visits should have lessened in frequency was a sign of good augury. Better after all to let things be, and wait on the tide of events.

CHAPTER IX.

'THE PLOT RIPENS.'

IT was a condition of Charlotte's mental obliquity that when once beloved Hero and Leander, or Nebuchadnezar, or the Queen of Sheba, were in hand, she wept over their griefs, joyed with their joys, to the exclusion of all else. Hence she did not, as otherwise she might have done, favour the invalid with details of her intercourse with the Jacobite. We are all ready to admit the undesirability of chattering about other persons' affairs, and shall of course applaud the resolution of the actress to engross her mind with her own business to the exclusion of unwholesome yearnings. We shall rejoice possibly in that, having suffered as she had suffered, she was spared the extra anxiety that would have accrued from following Lord Forfar's movements.

Cincinnatus roamed about his little farm like a caged animal, growling and uttering outcries; and

Mr. Pulteney followed in his shadow, chapfallen. Boreas and Hygeia had certainly entered into an alliance for the purpose of flouting the patriots. Though the waves had lashed and roared, his Majesty's yacht had ridden safely into harbour; and now the great cold, which for some days had exercised the medicine-men, was gone, and George was charming well. The army was on the point of being disbanded. It must be now or never. The last chance was passing which, if allowed to slip, might never return. Unless the foes of Bluestring were content, abandoning opposition, to bow and lick his shoe, they must make a last supreme effort to upset him and bring in the 'King over the water.'

There had been so many delays, such an ominous series of postponements, that some disgusted patriots had deserted the colours and made friends with the Mammon of unrighteousness. Leaders could have but little faith in themselves, they argued, who shilly-shallied and put off and were so glib in the matter of excuses. The whole fabric would dissolve into thin air unless something decisive were done at once. Pulteney explained to my Lord Bolingbroke that he had been to the Cock and Bottle in the Strand, under cover of twilight, and had there held discourse with sundry persons connected with the usurper's forces; but he regretted to perceive how they had cooled—how little they really cared for King James—how ready they were to ape their

leaders in the exercise of procrastination. They all asked after my Lord Forfar. What were his views and opinions? Did he think that this was the moment for the blow? 'Twas he who had sounded the men in camp, had inoculated them with his own enthusiasm; had, in fact, organized this portion of the plan. He was universally respected; they looked to him more than to St. John or to Pulteney, who, having remained in the background, were mere shadows in their eyes. It was he who was to have taken the command and led the onslaught. If he did not come forward now, 'twas plain there would be a difficulty. Bolingbroke meditated and took snuff. The enthusiasm of Gervas was gone, and had given place to cavilling, dissection, doubt. Although there was no fear of his turning traitor, his conduct of late had been most deplorable. Mr. Pulteney was of opinion that if Lord Forfar held back, the soldiers would decline to move. In that case what could be done? The cards had certainly been played extremely ill. Instead of first ascertaining whether they could do without him, the junta had loftily allowed Gervas to backslide instead of keeping him to his alliance.

A trusty messenger was despatched to the Bear to invite Gervas to Dawley. My Lord Bolingbroke exerted all those charms of polished manner and courtly grace which were so much appreciated by my Lord Chesterfield, and finally placing his bejewelled

hands on the Scotchman's shoulders, put the question plainly. Lord Forfar was silent for so long that Pulteney shuffled uneasily, and Bolingbroke reddened with annoyance. Somebody must have tampered with the ex-enthusiast. Had Bluestring's arts succeeded in winning the incorruptible one? A woman was at the bottom of it, of course. Tidings of the pilgrimages to Kensington had reached their ears. How many complications and failures are due to the wiles of Delilah? St. John was about to lose his temper and burst forth into upbraidings when Forfar spoke.

'There is but one King,' he said simply, 'and I will lay down my life for him if need be, as I have already laid down my fortune. His Majesty, whom God bless, knows that I am faithful to the Stuarts till death, as my fathers were; and yet I fear the sacrifice will be as vain as theirs!'

'Why,' cried St. John, 'is not the usurper universally detested? Any change should be for the better. The family of Hanover's a by-word.'

'I fear me that God is not with us,' quietly replied Gervas.

Bolingbroke paced the room, humming through his teeth, and, wheeling, scrutinized the Scotchman.

'"Plain and straightforward" must be the motto,' he said sternly. 'When we deemed it prudent to hold back—and events showed that we were right—

you insisted on action, with the result we wot of. Now that we resolve to strike, you preach delay. With or without you the sword shall be drawn. His Majesty suspects that you purposely thwart our efforts.'

'Then is his Majesty unjust!' exclaimed Gervas, with troubled countenance. 'Have I not said he may claim my life?'

'In his name do we accept it,' cried Bolingbroke, 'for the fateful hour hath struck.'

Lord Forfar bowed his head with a deep sigh. His judgment whispered that action now meant a forlorn hope. Well, a true and gallant soldier steps into the breach—shoulder to shoulder with his comrades—without demur. It should never be said that he shrank in the hour of danger. Many a forlorn hope hath ended in triumph.

The trio retired to the centre of the field, as usual, and debated over the position. Now that 'twas settled, the eye of Gervas brightened with animation. No half-hearted help should come from him. So much time having been lost, it would be necessary to review the lists.

My Lord Forfar had better see the officers, suggested Pulteney, and report. The family of the usurper was in town; so were Bluestring and my Lord Cadogan, Commander of the Forces. No moment would be more auspicious than the present one. Would Lord Forfar produce his lists?

They were in a safe place, the latter explained, easily accessible. The scheme was cut and dried. 'Twould be well to go through it with a view to remedying errors. 'Twas simple enough, and, barring accidents, promising. Had Guise's attempt on Calais failed, the world would have hooted him as a madman. It succeeded, by reason of its simplicity as well as of its audacity. The day for execution of the project was to be settled by the roster of the Tower-guard, the turn of a disaffected officer being awaited. Eight sergeants in the Park camp could be relied upon; three in the first regiment of Foot-guards, three in the second, two in the third. My Lord Forfar was to control these sergeants, each of whom could count on twenty-five privates, making a total of two hundred. These men were to move singly out of camp, and on reaching the rendezvous were to receive arms, brought for the purpose from a depôt by Waterside.

'I have a trusty lieutenant,' Gervas explained, 'who is a friend of Burnworth's, and will engage him to conceal the arms for us at Execution Dock. The officer within must be precisely at nine at the Tower Gate, and perceiving the coming of soldiers, must give orders to admit them as a recruit to the Tower-guard. The Exchange and the Bank will be occupied by this contingent, who will be responsible for my Lord Cadogan. A second detachment (of Horse-guards, who are known to be our friends)

will, on the first alarm of the City having revolted, march to Newgate on pretence of suppressing the riot, open the gates and let out the prisoners, who will create a diversion and confusion. A captain will be in Southwark at the hour of nine, and light a bonfire as signal, which will bring out the boys of the Mint. A detachment will ferry across river in lighters, and make for St. James's Park, which will be already occupied by another captain. This one will have marched down to the Parade next the Horse Guards, have seized the cannon and ammunition, and have secured the Park for a place of general rendezvous. A fourth captain will, at the hour of nine, have raised the Westminster mob in Tothill Fields, have marched to Sir Robert Walpole's, and have brought him to St. James's Park. An officer will head the watermen belonging to the Thames, who will proceed to Greenwich and seize the magazine of powder.'

'Very well,' nodded Bolingbroke, shaking back his costly ruffles, and removing a speck from his coat. 'What of the usurper?'

'The St. James's guard is but a small one, and easily overpowered,' Gervas replied, with a smile. 'I, with my own party, will look after the palace, under pretence of securing the sacred person of his Majesty against the rioters; while a captain will do the same for Norfolk House, and seize the Prince of Wales.'

So far, the amiable intentions of the schemers were as precise as possible. It would be necessary to ascertain exactly the feelings of the various captains; to fire their cooling zeal. As for the men, they would give little trouble, for it had been understood that their names were enrolled on a list now in possession of King James, who had given each a guarantee that in case of misfortune their families would be taken care of.

Gervas rode back to London in a brown study. He could scarce realize that the scheme, so carefully weighed and considered for years, so tenderly nursed and pruned, was really to become history! His convictions as to its feasibility had undergone a change, and yet as he crossed off the heads just now, it had seemed plausible and promising.

The people, if they were made to understand that all the points of vantage had changed hands, would quietly acquiesce in a new *régime*, glad that the Guelfs were ousted. But would the change be indeed for the public benefit? Was James better than George as monarch, Bolingbroke better as a minister than Bluestring? Inwardly he doubted whether there was much to choose between the parties, but repeated to himself, in parrot-fashion, that right was right; that the legitimate claimant should have his own; that Providence must be responsible for the rest. 'Twas in the power of man —at least, he thought so—to give the King the

crown that should by inheritance be his, but 'twas not in the power of man to mould his character. Gervas had striven hard to close his ears against the stories that persisted in coming across seas about the unworthiness of James and his ignoble life. If they were true—and there was little doubt they were—could God be on the side of such a creature? But what boots such meditating? Doth it not behove blind man to follow the dictates of his conscience, and leave the rest to Heaven? There could be no denying that—as a matter of birthright—James ought to be upon the throne instead of George. He had already solemnly promised, though himself a Papist, to respect the national faith. And yet—and yet—were not both of the twain unworthy?

Lord Forfar spurred his horse into a canter; for, when he tried to see, he found himself plunging deep into a hopeless maze of hair-splitting. Having given his word, he would not draw back. As for himself, what did it matter? He was alone in the world. Whether he lived or died signified nothing to anyone. The landlord of the Bear would possibly miss him; nobody else. Pamela? With a feeling of cold, followed by an after-glow, he thanked Heaven for that escape. And then, at the thought of her, he laughed. The scene she had made about the frail weak woman was vastly droll. To think she should ever have taken him in! Verily, he was not strong from the point of view of judgment.

Was he equally deceived in Barbara? He had been, but was so no more. Not that it mattered; for if Bluestring were undone through him, she would never see him again. At the thought his heart grew heavy, for those afternoons at Kensington had been very pleasant. Was he, who had given up so much, to hesitate over another sacrifice? 'Twould be hard to see Bab no more; but the inevitable must be accepted. Business now must occupy his mind to the exclusion of all else. That list of officers and men! He must find Charlotte, and open the precious packet. He would stroll across the Park at dusk, and knock at the postern-door.

When we calmly consider of it, 'tis wonderful that such surprises as the one under notice are ever wafted to success, since there are so many timid, intemperate, incautious people in the world. 'Tis amazing that there is not always some one who repents, and enacts marplot. On this occasion, one individual repented; or, weighing probabilities, considered there was more to be gained by betrayal than by trustworthiness. The man in question was of no higher rank than a sergeant, and therefore knew only the bare outline of the plot; but his narrative, as we have seen, was sufficient to startle the intended victims.

My Lord Cadogan and Sir Robert laid their heads together. The King stormed and blustered.

The Queen was appalled. Mr. Medlicote laughed, and was joined in his merriment by Mrs. Belfield. Mr. Crump was fully occupied. All agreed on one point—namely, that the plotters must be allowed to bring their scheme to the verge of completion, so that the snake might be killed instead of scotched. Nets must be laid which should catch the entire shoal, that mischief, from the side of the Pretender, might be for ever averted. The time was come when the Jacobites must be crushed. But to manage this cleverly required skill and tact. To do it satisfactorily needed something more tangible than such blundering confessions as could be wrung from a few soldiers. The Dawley junta, who were at the bottom of the trouble, were crafty. How to connect them by overwhelming proof with the confessions of the soldiery—there was the rub. My Lord Cadogan and the others met in solemn conclave in the apartments of the Vice-Chamberlain; and the latter ran up the backstair at intervals to report progress to the Queen, who, on her side, waxed impatient at the small results of the conference.

Ranulph was extremely dissatisfied with the way things were going. He was genuinely attached to the Queen—sincerely admired Walpole; but could not at this juncture approve the policy of either. There was much excuse for both; for were they not both worried to fiddle-strings by the impossible temper of the King? Young though he was, it began to

come home to Ranulph that ingratitude is the only plant which thrives in courts; that what he had told Sir Robert in their first interview was strictly true—namely, that the golden key he held was a badge of menial servitude. He was rich and well-born, with his life before him; and yet he dwelt in a mean lodging under the backstairs, and could not call an hour his own. And what did he gain in return? Worry, and annoyance, and fatigue. For two pins he would throw it all up, and settle down as a virtuoso and country gentleman. And yet this was mere passing peevishness. Sir Robert was not ungrateful for the good offices which he daily rendered him. He who aspires to win laurels as a Parliament-man and courtier must learn to wait. If only the King were not so disagreeable! Caroline's health was breaking down under the constant strain of managing her unruly husband. She looked pale and tired; her eyes were dull; her steps heavy; for some time past she had been growing unnaturally stout. What if she succumbed? Then Heaven help his cross-grained Majesty! He had better be off with all despatch to Herrenhausen, never to return. What would happen to Walpole in such a case? What to himself?

'Twas curious that, considering his age, the Minister should so cling to power, resigning the cultured ease he had so well earned for what even young Ranulph gauged as mirage. He was wont,

when desponding, to declare that, having been teased by the thorns, and glutted with the fruits of power, ease and safety would soon outweigh all other considerations; and yet he trotted on his gouty legs, and bent his stiff old back and grinned when George was rude, putting away the fact that when we die the grass grows quickly over us, admitting all the while that no one is missed after a week, however superior his station.

The atmosphere of St. James's was so close and stifling as to be at some moments insupportable. The Queen, tormented as she was, and rapidly failing in health, suspected the sincerity of her best friends, making them as wretched as herself. She, usually so large-minded, was peevish and captious. Was not the daily behaviour of husband and son enough for a poor woman to endure, without this vague new trouble, threatened by the Jacobites? 'Tis dreadful to sit upon a powder-barrel, awaiting the moment of explosion.

Sir Robert stood convicted of failure in his favourite policy. My Lord Cadogan might sweep the horizon with his gimlet-eye; the Minister might open his purse of secret-service money, and break the windows with guineas, as Bolingbroke was wont to grumble; 'twas impossible to touch the bottom of the hellish plot, which hourly threatened earthquake. Barbara's guardsman had been cross-questioned, threatened, cajoled — so had several

others; but they could not tell more than they knew. 'Twas obvious that to cackle about the camp, asking suspicious questions, would only alarm the traitors, and give them warning to escape. Walpole was obstinately resolved to fill his net, and crush once and for aye the Pretender's prospects. Till this was done, the foundations of the new dynasty were unstable, though few of the foreign powers favoured the Chevalier. So long as important personages were liable to be kidnapped in their homes, what chance was there of security or peace for a day or hour? The ring-leaders of so serious an attempt must be caught and punished. Certainly. But Ranulph was tired of remarking that, while they chattered and consulted, precious time was passing, and counsellors progressed no further.

Ranulph's forebodings were but too well justified. Just when her large intellect and clear understanding would have been of greatest value to the King's counsellors the assistance of Caroline was withdrawn. Exhausted nature collapsed. She was taken ill whilst passing a morning at the library in St. James's Park, so ill as to be compelled to keep her room. His Majesty urged fortitude. That she should be accused of want of courage! Signs of fever showed themselves, accompanied by excruciating pain.

The King, alarmed, lay on the Queen's bed all night in his brocaded gown instead of retiring to his

own side. The Vice-Chamberlain passed the hours in the anteroom conversing in whispers with the women. Mrs. Belfield was grave and demure. She had shuffled her cards, and cut and dealt them, arranging the suits in hand with care, and what was the result of her pains? When she made certain of a trick she lost it. 'Twas provoking in the highest degree. The unexpected was always happening. There was nothing for it but to drift, fearing the worst, hoping for the best; waiting grimly upon Destiny.

The Honourable Pamela was vastly sorry for herself. That Jezebel at Kensington was much too prosperous. True, she had been ill, and lost her infant. That much was gratifying. But she had risen from the ashes of penury like a phœnix. The infatuated Walpole was for ever quoting her words. How nauseous! My Lord Belvedere, when he returned to England shortly, would take her up again. It was a mercy that she was tied to Crump. What-e'er befell, the sisters could never be expected to dwell together. This was a grain of comfort.

When reflecting on the unstable condition of the House of Hanover, Mrs. Belfield had always supposed that at the worst she would have to live at Herrenhausen, instead of Richmond or St. James's. But if aught should happen to the Queen—and she grew worse hour by hour—even this alternative would vanish.

As it was, the difficulty of getting stubborn ends to meet was extreme; and yet she had lodgings free, and enjoyed a slender stipend. Must she indeed look forward to abiding with Lord Belvedere, who never liked her; who, objecting to failure, would flout and fleer at her, make her life a burthen? Not but what her tongue was a doughty weapon of defence, which 'twould be pleasing to flesh in the wrinkled carcase of a parent. If anything happened to the Queen!

To make matters in the palace worse, the Prince of Wales became importunate and inconvenient in his affection. He threatened to call upon his ailing mother, whereupon his papa flew in a passion. The Vice-Chamberlain was bidden to state that the Queen was not fit to see him act his whining, cringing tricks; while as for the King, he was in no humour to bear his impertinence.

Family quarrels aired in public at so critical a moment would have a deplorable effect. Ranulph used all his influence to induce her Majesty to grant her son an interview; and Pamela, to please him, argued in a similar strain.

'He thinks I am done for,' the Queen observed, tossing painfully upon her pillow, 'and would give himself the joy of knowing I was dead five minutes sooner than in St. James's Square.'

Certainly, the fresh complication which was showing itself was like a fresh nail in a coffin. It would

not do for her Majesty to talk of dying. The indisposition would wear itself away. Were they not all in direful distress only t'other day about the King? First he was drowning; then he was laid up with a great cold; but now he was quite well, crouching by the fire—moody and subdued, no doubt—but strong as ever. Her Majesty must make an effort. She said nothing in reply. Sick persons give way to forebodings, deeming themselves worse than they are.

Each time that Medlicote stole up the backstair, and crept a-tiptoe into the anteroom to peep in at the open door, her eyes followed his movements with inquiry, and when he shook his head she sighed fretfully, and tossed. Had nothing been discovered relative to the plot? Where were the vaunted spies on whose dearly purchased zeal Sir Robert had relied?

Mental anxiety is a bad nurse. To keep intelligence from the patient was worse than speaking the truth. How gladly would those about her have raised her spirits by scraps of news; but alack, there was naught to tell.

Thus did the days drag after one another with lagging footfall. The afternoon conferences in Ranulph's room were as barren as ever. The counsellors were at a deadlock. Sir Robert must be losing his senses, Caroline complained. What was this nonsense about waiting to net the shoal? She sent down peremptory messages from out of the

sick-chamber by Mrs. Belfield, that if they droned and dallied thus the plot would be ripe and they undone for ever. 'Twas all very well for my Lord Cadogan to have an eye on proceedings at the Tower. What if there were ramifications of which the soldier-conspirators knew nothing? Might not the Dawleyites be imprisoned on suspicion? Even if naught came of it, 'twould be a trouncing for the past.

Walpole was averse to so high-handed a proceeding, for there is good capital to be made of martyrdom, and in the shaky condition of affairs it behoved him to beware of slipping.

Now it befell that on a certain evening Mr. Crump emerged from St. James's at the conclusion of a conference, and made across the Mall, skirting the gardens of his Grace of Marlborough, with his gold-bespattered bavaroy drawn well up to his nose, for the air was sharp. The secretary was sallying forth on one of the numerous errands of which he was getting so tired, for nothing came of them, when his quick step was suddenly arrested, and he recoiled into a friendly corner.

Indeed, 'twas an extraordinary spectacle of which he was an involuntary witness. A tall gentleman, whom he recognised at once, in spite of roquelaure and unlooped hat, was standing at the postern-door which communicated with the Vice-Chamberlain's apartment.

What could my Lord Forfar want at this hour with Mr. Medlicote—or at any hour? They were not friends; and if they had been he would have entered the central gate, not have crept to the unused postern. Unused, save sometimes by the servants, Mr. Crump believed.

His suspicion sharpened by hatred, Honest Jack lingered in the shadow. Oh! if the Scot could be connected somehow with the affair, what joy! To track him down, what pleasure! To see his head chopped off, what exquisite delight! Presently a bar was drawn, and the pale face of Sir Charles peered forth into the gloaming. A little cry of unexpected recognition, and a few hurried words. Lord Forfar entered, and the door closed on him.

What could this mean? Constantly as he was in the habit of seeing Charlotte in attendance on his wife, he had never cared to inquire where she dwelt.

The phases of her career had been so numerous and kaleidoscopic as long since to have stifled surprise at aught she might choose to do. Jack could feel nothing but contempt for so feckless a creature. Had she not been a shopwoman, an actor, a waiter, a street hawker—what not? disgracing her parent always. That she had turned friseur some one had mentioned—Bab possibly; but what could she be about in St. James's Palace? Apparently at home,

too, and receiving lords as visitors. Jacobite lords!

This was so remarkable as to require investigation. Did Medlicote know Charlotte Charke?

Turning about, Mr. Crump re-entered the palace from the front, resolved to question the Vice-Chamberlain.

Ranulph was surveying a new suit of broidered satin, just arrived from France, wherewith he was about to try and amuse her Majesty, when Jack knocked for admittance.

'Come in!' he cried testily, for indeed he was sick at heart.

Fresh symptoms in her disorder were developing themselves. She would ask a hundred questions presently, then subside into tears, while the King growled. Verily his place was growing as oppressive as that of Suffolk had been; for is it not trying to be reproached for what you cannot help, to be compelled to listen to grief which 'tis not in your power to assuage?

Sir Robert's secretary? What did he want? Had he left something behind just now?

Honest Jack plumped down into a seat with so little ceremony as to vex Mr. Medlicote. A very presuming man who required snubbing. How that actress could ever have married such a fellow—impudent rascal! What right had such as he to come plumping into seats uninvited, and making idle

inquiries when everyone was devoured with anxiety? Ranulph examined himself in a hand-mirror, and coldly said as much; but presently dropped it on the floor, where it shivered into fragments, and turned to gaze upon his visitor. What was this? A woman in man's clothes a member of his household? Impossible! Of course he had often heard of Charlotte Charke and her vagaries, but had never seen her to his knowledge.

The Vice-Chamberlain flushed with annoyance as he wondered if the charge were true, for if it were he would be the laughing-stock of the town! A woman in male attire about his person and he not smoke her! The youth who bore the nickname of Sir Charles was modest and well-behaved; natty and dexterous with his fingers. If 'twas indeed Colley's wild daughter who had been guilty of such a freak much would be accounted for, since 'twas unusual to find a serving-man so retiring and decent.

Ranulph was still in the throes of stupefaction when his amazement was yet further increased. My Lord Forfar visiting his perukier in disguise! That my Lord Forfar was an eccentric individual, who was in the habit of doing strange things and keeping queer company, he was aware—but visit at St. James's the female in man's garb—his serving-man or serving-woman! Ranulph was so staggered that he scarce knew which it was. What could there be in common between Sir Charles and the reserved and haughty

Jacobite? Sure Mr. Crump was over-sanguine in expecting that the interview could have aught to do with the all-engrossing difficulty. When absorbed we are apt to connect everything with the knotty point in hand; and yet—what could the tie be 'twixt the ill-assorted couple?

Mr. Medlicote's jewelled fingers were stretched towards the silver gong upon the table that Sir Charles might be summoned; but Jack checked the movement. Caution and stratagem. Were not these the watchwords of Sir Robert's campaign? The Scotch lord was still on the premises. An *éclaircissement* now would mean a crossing of swords and no information gained. Charlotte—for it was Charlotte; Mr. Medlicote might take the secretary's word for it—her morning duties over, would trudge, as was her custom, on the morrow to visit Madam Crump. The coast would be clear. The lodging of the sham serving-man might be comfortably ransacked, and if naught were found, they would be no worse off than at present. There was wisdom in this view; though 'twas hard to curb impatience when so much was at stake, and minutes, possibly, so precious. Before taking his leave, with the sly smile which Ranulph instinctively disliked, Mr. Crump had a word to add. If the projected exploration was crowned with success, the Vice-Chamberlain would not forget that the discovery was due to——

'Oh yes!' Ranulph interrupted tartly, anxious to

be rid of his visitor. ''Tis dirty work, prying into a woman's boxes. If you take the blame of the job, you are welcome to all the credit.'

Honest Jack was well disciplined in the cultivation of meekness when his interest pointed towards virtue. He nodded, therefore, without taking umbrage; and seeking again the friendly shadow, was rewarded by a sight of the Jacobite emerging from the postern. Without glancing behind, Gervas moved hurriedly along, across the Mall in the direction of Westminster. He was going home to the Bear. The postern-door closed gently, a key turned in the lock, the bar was replaced. Charlotte was going to bed, unconscious of spying eyes. Between such a couple, intercourse at such an hour must be criminal. The morals of the strait-laced lord were beyond reproach. Beaming with exultation, Jack leered at the moon as he galloped to Kensington, oblivious of highwaymen or footpads, and shook his fist at the calm luminary. Footpads and highwaymen, forsooth! Would not the devil, his chosen master, protect him from such paltry perils? Bab was awake, and heard her husband's tread without unusual sensations. Ah! if she had only known—careless as regarded herself, would she not have sprung up like a lioness; have seized him by the throat despite his thews and sinews? Was there no presentiment hovering in mid-air to whisper of impending sorrow—to say that the man she

loved was in grievous danger at the hands of the man she hated? No. Charlotte in her cot slept the unruffled sleep of the secure. Barbara in her cosy chamber pondered over the theatric woes of mimic Alicia, on the threshold of a real tragedy.

Medlicote comforted her Majesty with a few mysterious but hopeful words. Although the diurnal council had ended much after its ordinary fashion, something had transpired since from which hope might be culled. Her Majesty must excuse her devoted servant from entering on details, he said; but really there was something behind which, when she knew all about it, would induce her to shake off languor. Surely she felt better this evening? The Vice-Chamberlain was vivacious and chatty, informing the young Princesses that to-morrow he would have a tale for them at which all would laugh, himself included, though the joke was at his own expense.

Caroline's spirits rose, and she looked really better. Perhaps she was over-nervous, too despondent. Even this black cloud might pass. Medlicote swore that it could and would, and engaged the King at cribbage. Crump's story was a queer one, he reflected while he played. The investigation of his own domestic's boxes, man or woman, was, as he had scornfully declared, a dirty job, and he would himself most assuredly have nothing to do with it. Therefore when a jubilant Crump arrived on the morrow, burning to turn over the small

possessions of Sir Charles, Ranulph left him to his labours, summoning his chairmen that he might enjoy an airing on the Mall.

A comfortable apartment Ranulph's was, for all his flippant complaints anent a gilded cage. Pictures covered the walls. Snuff-boxes and odds and ends littered the tables. Insignificant little tokens from the Queen. A fan. A bunch of shoulder-ribbons, which the secretary remembered to have seen worn by one of the Princesses.

He was indeed well with the great, Jack thought with envy. Why should not he, Jack, be equally favoured by-and-by? In the watches of the night, while Bab considered Alicia, he was working like a spider in a web, contriving, planning. His wife was quiescent, but hard and cold as ever. Full of whimsies, wayward, capricious. At any minute she might turn on him, snap her fingers in his face, now that the bond was broken. Were she and the objectionable Scot weary of each other, or merely too much occupied, each for the moment, to resume familiar intercourse? That she liked the Scot he had read too frequently in her face. Wayward in many things, she was steadfast in friendships as in dislikes. She certainly had been terribly unwavering in dislike for the man she had married. Putting two and two together, Jack had guessed at once that Charlotte had become the unsuspected depositary of the documents for which he had searched at the

Bear in vain. If by the devil's help he succeeded in capturing something deliciously compromising, what should he do? Would it be most advantageous to surrender the sheep to the shambles, or to use his safety as a whip for the governing of Barbara? 'Twould be monstrous vexing to forego a sweet revenge, but would it not be charming to bring stiff-necked Bab into subjection? It might become possible to denounce the rest, but leave the Scotchman scatheless; to keep papers securely hidden, to be held *in terrorem*, whereby Gervas might be betrayed at any time.

Would the new chain be of sufficient strength for the intended purpose? If he were to inform his wife that by raising a finger it was in his power to hand over her cherished friend to the awful punishment of a traitor—how would she act? There never was any knowing how she would take things. So astute a gentleman as Mr. Crump must not fall any more into the predicament of the wench with the basket of eggs. First he must see whether his suspicions were justified, and steer his bark accordingly.

A narrow passage, contrived in the thickness of the wall and masked by a curtain, led from Mr. Medlicote's sitting-parlour to a tiny eyrie, fit only for a bird, wherein his perukier roosted. A truckle-bed and an old trunk filled the floor, leaving scarce room to turn. My Lord Forfar would not seek such a spot, except on important business. The trunk

was closed by a worn hasp which yielded to pressure. What an *omnium gatherum!* Sure the travelling-box of Autolycus was not more varied. Silk stockings, curling-tongs, Sir Charles's ragged suit which he had worn in Montagu Close. Scraps of tawdry finery, and dolls half dressed. Plunging both hands into the medley he tossed the heap upon the boards, and sitting on the mattress commenced to investigate at leisure. A bundle of papers peeped from a coat-pocket. The seal had been broken, and the packet tied up with a hair-ribbon.

Honest Jack could not smother a shout of exulting glee, as, rising in sudden triumph, he smote his pate against the ceiling. Aha! the abortive search by river-side! Here was the pretty treasure for which his hands had groped. The heads of the plot, as dimly shadowed by the soldier—complete in every detail—a letter from the Duke of Wharton, writ from Rome, the imprudent scapegrace. '*Au défaut de la force*,' he said, '*il faut employer la ruse*.' Quite so. Honest Jack was of the same opinion. Some papers in cypher; they would keep. 'Mem. An officer will go to Richmond, and at given hour take Fat Pritty Man and bear him safe to Southwark.' Walpole, no doubt. A delectable scheme! execrable traitors! 'Manufactory; workmen.' The last word stood for soldiers, as might be read without a cypher. ''Twill be very agreeable to all concerned —particularly to Mr. Atkins.' Of course it would,

since, as the secret-service people had discovered, the name of Mr. Atkins stood for the Pretender. There were names mentioned in some of the documents of great honour and loyalty to the House of Hanover. But Mr. Crump knew better than to be astonied. Absolutely, receipts for moneys expended in the Cause—'I acknowledge to have received from Lord Forfar the sum of three thousand pounds, which sum I will repay with an interest for it'—signed in full 'James R.'

No wonder that the impoverished Scot sought a safe refuge for such valuable and compromising papers. Mr. Crump quite tingled with satisfaction as he appropriated the bundle, regretting only that 'twas not entire. Why and when had the seal been broken? There were no lists of officers or men. 'Twas for them, maybe, that my lord called furtively last night. There was no time to lose, then. There was enough here to send many heads a-rolling, without touching my Lord Forfar, who should be held as a hostage for Barbara's good behaviour.

Mr. Crump was about to restore order to the *omnium gatherum*, when he was conscious of the creaking of a door, the grating of a key. The postern-door! He hurriedly rose, and stumbling over the pallet retired to the sitting-parlour; but not so quickly as to escape the terror-stricken view of Charlotte in the entry. The man whose innate villainy she had cause to know so well—ferreting

in her retreat! Trembling like an aspen she flew to her box. What a ravishing of cherished treasures! The pocket of the tawdry coat was empty, and she uttered a low wail, as, covering her face with quivering fingers, she sank upon the floor:

'Am I destined always to bring evil in my wake? —leprous wretch that I am! The evil-eye—the evil-eye—evil for her and then for him. Oh, why was I ever born?'

CHAPTER X.

'THE QUEEN RETIRES.'

IT was not given to her Majesty to witness the passing of the whirlwind which threatened the ruin of her house. Her malady took a sudden turn for the worse, and it was plain to all that she was sinking. Ranby, surgeon to the household, made the discovery too late that she suffered from a complaint of long-standing, which had been carefully concealed from all. Other medical men were summoned in haste, and they declared at once that she was in the utmost danger; that mortification was setting in; that her remaining tenure of existence might be counted by hours.

Then came that most solemn moment for those who are in health—the parting on the mystic shore from the comrade of a life who is about to start on the great voyage which all must make some day.

Servants, hastily summoned, trooped in to look their last on her whom they had served so long.

Ranulph stood at the bed-foot, and gazed at his mistress through his tears. He was genuinely sorry to lose Caroline; for no one could hold intercourse with the Queen without esteeming her. The sturdiness of her character and the largeness of her intellect commanded respect. Not carried away by sentiment, she could calmly weigh pros and cons, and adopt the most advantageous. To a later age, the bluntness of her sayings and the quiet way in which she accepted outrageous facts may appear strange; but she was cast in the mould of her time, and fitted it. Beyond reproach herself in morals, she could look with indulgence on the peccadilloes of others, and make excuse for human weaknesses.

It is characteristic that she was the only woman, with the exception of Bab and the Richmond Fair Rosamond, who liked Sir Robert Walpole. Other women were afraid of his coarseness, alarmed by his utter want of scruple in the choice of means whereby ends might be attained. Herself of the earth earthy, Caroline could appreciate his worldly wisdom, not troubling her mind with bootless splitting of straws.

Never was a pair of rulers so exactly suited to each other. Sir Robert could talk to her Majesty as if she were a clever man. Her memory hath received assaults, as the memories of all great people

always have, and ever will. She hath been accused of a lack of those motherly qualities which are the brightest jewels in a woman's diadem; than which nothing could be less just.

Their Majesties shared a profound dislike for their eldest-born, which was warranted by his behaviour. For her other children the Queen displayed ample affection. She loved William as much as she hated Frederick, and was much exercised on her death-bed anent the future of her younger daughters.

In bidding farewell to her husband, she took a ruby ring from off her finger, which she had received on the day of coronation, and placed it upon his.

'Naked I came to you, and naked I go from you,' she said. 'I had everything I ever possessed from you, and to you whatever I have I return.'

Poor lady! She had received a large allowance of *tracasseries*, and *bullying*, and *annoyance* from the most Christian King, which she did not return. Save on very rare occasions, when, goaded beyond endurance, her tongue got the better of discretion, she systematically practised the maxim of displaying the other cheek. It would have been more than human to have refrained from planting pins into the much-enduring Suffolk. We have seen how quietly she accepted the existence of the Walmoden, and indited impartial criticisms on that houri. She knew her George to the ends of the nails, as the

French have it; and, having taken him for better and for worse, was too wise to be surprised at the exceeding preponderance of the latter. Seeing as she could with clear vision into his innermost recesses, she was anxious that, so soon as the grave had closed on her, he should seek another wife.

As he knelt by her bed, she said so in plain terms, upon which his sobs began to rise, and his tears to fall with double vehemence. Whilst in the midst of this passion, and sobbing between every word, with much ado he got out this answer:

'*Non. J'aurai des maîtresses.*'

To which the Queen made no other reply than:

'*Ah, mon Dieu! Cela n'empêche pas!*'

Could the epitome of the lives and characters of both have been recorded by more incisive strokes? in fewer, more laconic sentences?

In his way he loved her, and she knew it; and, true to her tenets, was content to accept what he could give. Such virile women as she never pule over 'ifs' and 'might-have-beens.'

Having settled her family affairs, she was exhausted, and felt that she could sleep. The King said many kind things, kissed her face and hands as he knelt on the parquet; but even now, when she asked for her watch, which hung by the chimney, in order that he might take her seal, the natural sharpness of his temper broke out, which showed how addicted he was to snapping without being angry—

how capable of using those the worst whom he liked best.

Amid sobs and tears, he harshly raised his voice, and cried:

'Ah, my God! Let it alone. The Queen has such strange fancies. Who should meddle with your seal? 'Tis as safe there as in my pocket.'

The watchers respected the parting of these life-travellers, and sat over a fire in the anteroom discussing the future. Mrs. Belfield was much exercised; and, supremely anxious about herself and her prospects, showed in her best light. 'She hath a heart,' Ranulph mused, with some astonishment. This gravity of demeanour and anxious sadness for the departing voyager was vastly pretty in one who was *par excellence* a fluttering butterfly.

To some minds there is a piquant charm about good qualities concealed, which force themselves into notice only on great emergencies. 'Tis like finding an odorous violet lurking under a leaf. We rather like the leaf, and touch it to feel its rugose texture; and are pleasantly surprised to come upon the blossom.

Pamela in society behaved in a delectably mundane manner, roguishly snapping fingers at male creatures, swearing she could do without 'em. But in the presence of Death and sore impending calamity (which would bring sharp inconvenience on herself), these fascinating little arts and graces faded.

Pamela looked worn and harassed, and was subdued. Her eyes were hollow, and her cheeks pale. There is pathetic beauty in the havoc due to sympathy and unselfish grief.

Ranulph wist not that Mrs. Belfield's haggardness was due only to sorrow for her own critical plight.

'She hath a heart,' he said inwardly, with wonder; 'and would look like this if one she loved was going.'

Now, the views of Mr. Medlicote on the subject of matrimony coincided with those which mark the comedies of his period. Stay-at-home Darby and Joan are uninteresting people. What is the world for, unless it may be enjoyed? and how can two people be always ready to enjoy the same object? As to his future line of conduct, he was undecided. To be a Parliament-man and trusted ally of a Queen and a Prime Minister was mighty fine, but had its drawbacks. Since the Queen must die, he would give up the place at Court, which was a genteel slavery, and amuse himself. Was he not affluent? He would see company, buy pictures, dance, sing, play.

Mr. Medlicote cared nothing for George any more than did the rest of his subjects. The newly modelled Court, therefore, would be unbearable to the adherents of Caroline. Fancy sacrificing youth and liberty to a Walmoden! No. A courtier must be all things to all men. When you leave the Court

you are nobody's servant, and can thus become anybody's friend.

It would be necessary to come to some decision now with regard to the fascinating Belfield, for with the Queen's demise she would decamp — abroad, possibly. What should he decide on this important subject? To be, or not to be? If he was to set up as a virtuoso and dilettante, and open a fine house, it would be essential to place at the head of a modish household a modish wife; and, for the sake of future peace of mind, 'twould be needful to hit upon a worldling who would not want to bill and coo, or display foolish affection or jealousy.

As the King and Queen had dwelt together, so must Mr. Medlicote live with his future spouse. Now, the real question which urgently put itself forward for decision was, Could he do better than take unto himself the Honourable Pamela? 'Tis a trite but true axiom that in a wife you don't want beauty. On the contrary, considering the roaring lions that prowl, 'tis safer to go in search of that commodity after other people's spouses. Mrs. Belfield, underneath the giggling, was wondrously astute for her years; was much too clever and cool-headed ever to go astray and make a fool of her liege lord. No worry need be apprehended on that score.

Sitting now over the fire, conversing in low tones, it struck Mr. Medlicote that he might do worse than pop the question at once, while the lady was in a

serious mood. Would she accept him? She had often laughed at his flame, when he pretended ardour, but that might be because she had seen he was not quite in earnest; but he was in earnest now—not full of love, or any fudge of that sort, but determined on a yea or nay for good and all. She had been hoighty-toighty, perking her chin and turning up her nose at the pretensions of a mere commoner. But circumstances alter cases. Since the differences which had arisen 'twixt her and the gloomy Scotchman, she had been less unkind, if saucy and scornful still, as becomes a free maiden. Of course a union with the unmodish and punctilious Jacobite never could have answered. Like oil and vinegar in a bottle would that pair have been. What she ever could have seen in him was to Medlicote past conjecturing; but do not women delight in doing things simply because unsuitable?

Now, in the presence of the Enemy of those who are happy, the friend of those who are afflicted, she seemed stricken with a softening pensiveness, and drew very near to the Vice-Chamberlain that her whispers might not be heard. Their heads were close together.

What was his opinion? she asked, posing her chin on a hand and peering anxiously into his eyes. Would his Majesty marry again? Would Walmoden come over and reign? What would happen

within St. James's? What was that which had transpired concerning the conspiracy? Would the wretches be caught, the danger averted? or must they all go forth into the cold? If he knew aught, why not communicate it to a loyal bedchamber-woman, whose secrecy and discretion might be trusted?

Yes; he did know something, whispered the Vice-Chamberlain, with such captivating mystery that Pamela itched to slap him. What it was he would not tell, but he would take the opportunity of congratulating a charming lady on a narrow escape from an imprudent union. No fear of going out into the cold, unless he, the speaker, was much mistaken.

Enigmatical and provoking! Did he refer to Gervas?

'Tis cruel,' she murmured, whimpering, 'to twit a frail woman for her weakness. I hate the creature! Sure a girl may feel her way ere ultimately resigning liberty? We must be content to don chains someday,' bleated the fair. 'Sure you may tell me all, since my Lord Forfar used me so infamously.'

There was an interesting quaver in her voice, which seemed to say that this was the moment. Glancing over his shoulder at the half-opened door, through which the sobs of the King were distinctly audible, he drew his stool a little nearer, and took a hand which she did not withdraw. 'Twas spectral

to hear his Majesty's lamentations breaking the stillness.

'What will happen ?' whispered Medlicote. 'This. The King will, for a time at least, be under the sway of Walmoden. The Court will be no place for us. Female vows were made to be broken. Could not Mrs. Belfield be persuaded to break that one about espousing a peer, and make a fellow happy who had long been a humble slave ?'

'Sure a humble slave may change his mind,' retorted arch Pamela; 'and a staunch supporter of Government claim a reward for services! If the Court was no longer a place for him, why not crave the ermine, and claim the boon he desired ? With the death of the Queen, Sir Robert's hold upon the King would slacken—would it not ? He would retire from office and need the assistance of his henchman no longer in the Lower House. Not that she would make a bargain. Not she! But a wooer should prove that his words are not idle wind.'

Ranulph raised the slender, aristocratic hand of Mrs. Belfield to his lips with satisfaction, and implanted a gallant salute, but dropped it with a qualm of remorse. Another wail from the inner room! Was this a moment for wooing ?

There was a slow and heavy footstep on the stair. Sir Robert Walpole entered, with flaccid cheeks and perturbed visage, looking a decade older.

The King, hearing his well-known voice, loomed

on the threshold, and Sir Robert, with some difficulty from increasing bulk and gout, knelt down to kiss his hand.

'How is the Queen?' he asked.

The King replied: 'Come, my good Sir Robert, and see for yourself.'

The interview was short, for having done with the world, Caroline could have little to say to her worldly councillor.

'My good Sir Robert,' she gasped, in a weak voice, 'you find me in an indifferent situation. I recommend the King, my children, and the kingdom to your care.'

This was all.

'What think you?' whispered Ranulph, when the Minister came again into the outer chamber.

'She is as much dead as if in her coffin,' sighed the Minister. 'It is all over with us. If I ever heard a corpse speak, 'twas in that room just now.'

They were all thinking of themselves about that deathbed. Cormorants and vultures from the establishment of Frederick came hovering to inquire if the Queen were better.

'Hoping she is worse,' groaned his Majesty. 'They are watching for her last breath, poor soul, in order to have the merit to their master of bringing the first tidings of her death.'

In intervals of consciousness, fewer and more sparse, the Queen was uneasy, begging that those

ravens might be turned out of the house who would tear her to pieces alive. Nor was she wrong in her surmise as to the Prince of Wales; for in Pall Mall the dutiful son was waiting with impatience, openly saying to those who were about him, with equal prudence and humanity:

'Sure we shall have soon good news, for she can't hold out much longer.'

The King was trying as usual, pattering up and down the floor, asking questions, talking fast and loud, then breaking into heart-rending cries; teasing the patient to eat and drink, and this in defiance of the doctors, who had prescribed absolute quiet as the only anodyne.

The Archbishop of Canterbury bustled in uninvited to pray for the soul of the sceptic; and the King fumed and fretted, for he never liked his Grace.

Pamela meditated concerning her marriage, and on the whole was not displeased with the orange-blossoms that sprouted 'mid the rue. Anyway, she was independent now of her parent, and when he was ironical, could speak out her mind to him. Ranulph had taken her by storm, and she rather liked it, for naught is so dull as your modest lover. She would be wealthy; and it was essential to be rich after the cheeseparings of years, since all modish couples vie and squabble as to which shall squander most.

She would see that Ranulph made a figure in the

world. Statue toes and sham Rembrandts are all very well, and the country endurable enough for a few minutes at a time; but Pamela had no idea of queening it over squires and parsons.

When she had asked him, a few mornings ago, whether he really had no ambition to leave footprints on the world's face, he had carelessly replied:

'I have just enough ambition; not too much. Too bountiful an allowance leads sometimes to heroic deeds; oftener to stupendous crimes.'

What rubbish! Once married to Ranulph she would teach him that he must not hope for dilettante idleness. She would prepare such curtain discourses as should make his life a burthen.

While Mrs. Pamela thus planned her future, Sir Robert was, as usual, pouring forth his difficulties into the ears of trusty Medlicote.

'I defy the ablest person in this kingdom,' he grumbled, 'to see what will next ensue. What are we to do about these Jacobites? Will they hold their unholy hands in face of a national bereavement? Under whose management will the King fall? Just now he was civil, which was of good augury. In what a seething broth of confusion are we now floundering!'

Ranulph, himself tolerably content, bestirred himself to cheer his friend, and the eyes of Mrs. Belfield looked approval. On the whole, she would prefer the fall of Walpole, since 'tis the graceful act of re-

tiring Ministers to confer favours, whilst claiming no further serfdom. Pamela's husband must not be a slave, and must pick up all that could be gleaned.

'Things will come right yet,' asserted Ranulph, in a whisper. 'His Majesty will cry for a fortnight, and forget her in a month. The Princess Emily is of an age to be of use, and, following her mother's lead, will exert a salutary influence. To you will fall the credit and the power. Your sway will be more absolute than ever; for the King is less penetrating than the Queen, and the young Princess poor in experience.'

'Ah!' Sir Robert sighed again, refusing consolation, for he knew better; 'I never could pin the King to a subject he dislikes. He skates away in spite of me. As for your bread-and-butter misses, they are worse than useless. Fanciful, stuck-up, bursting with importance and conceit. Capricious, too. No. I'll bring over Walmoden and strike a bargain with her. I was always for the wife against the mistress; but in this new situation I should be a dolt if I didn't prefer the mistress to the girls.'

Thus, while the soul of the well-tried ally yet lingered did they settle their individual plans, revolving what changes and modifications might best suit their several interests, so soon as the body should be cold. Sir Robert, old and stricken in years, was as ready as most Ministers to sacrifice the good of his country to an itching for continuance in office.

She would certainly be gone ere morning, calculated Pamela, as she masked a yawn behind her fan. Deathbeds are vastly tiresome—long-drawn-out and weariful. A turn of cribbage would while the time away, and yet perhaps 'twould be scarce decent. The small hours are chill and draughty. It might be well, all things considered, to leave the gentlemen undisturbed to drone together. If Ranulph had the smallest *savoir faire* he would take the opportunity and broach the important question of reward for services. No time like the present. How irritating was the conduct of the King as, groaning, he fumed in and out, and up and down. He looked like an apparition, in his trailing robe and immense white night-cap. Who wanted to hear his eulogiums and long-winded lectures over her whom he had so tormented?

She was a pattern woman—one of a thousand, he kept mumbling to children, physicians, servants—anyone whose ear was open as he fussed about the antechamber. The best wife, the best mother, the best companion, the best friend! She was the wisest, most useful creature! No two people in all the world had ever passed so many hours together, and yet he had never tired of her company one minute. She had the happy knack of disappointing people in the most charming manner, he declared, and sending them away empty but satisfied. Where to look for such another paragon? Ah me, and well-a-day! And then the red visage subsided into its

pocket-handkerchief, and was convulsed with moans and misery.

Caroline certainly displayed amazing firmness and dignity in her exceeding pain. Few are those who shine brightest when most tried. She never uttered a complaint during the dreary night, was complaisant to the last to the incarnation of self who hovered like a bat.

'*Qu'est-ce que vous regardez ?*' stormed the tyrant, standing by the bed. '*Vos yeux ressemblent à ceux d'un veau qu'on vient d'égorger !*'

Tender and brutal by turns as he had always been, George kept up his character to the end. At length, wearied by emotions, his Majesty fell asleep on the floor at the feet of the Queen's bed, and the Princess Emily in a great elbow-chair beside the window. Ranulph and Pamela sat watching like twin owls on either side of the hearth, nodding, starting, blowing of noses to dispel invading slumber. A sinister sound which nurses know too well echoed through the chamber. The Queen began to rattle in the throat. Mrs. Belfield, whose presence of mind was ever ready, sprang from her seat and gave the alarm. All in the room and in the ante-chamber started up in their various strange mufflings.

'Open the window !' Caroline gurgled faintly.

The Princess Emily, falling on her knees, began to read some prayers. The Pilgrim was there, tangible, almost visible—his breath the breath of the cold

morning as he stood and unveiled his face. Presently the Princess Caroline held a mirror to the blue lips, and simply said, 'Tis over!'

Then there was a pause of a few seconds, broken only by the loud ticking of the watch upon the nail, and then a breezy sigh; and all were conscious of that strange sensation of relief that comes over watchers when they know that the traveller has started.

'Twas the old old story, as old as the world, and ever new. '*Le roi est mort; vive le roi!*' What is done, is done, and can't be undone. A contemplation of empty clay, so awesome in the something wanting—of the lamp extinguished which had burned so brightly—is conducive to vapours; so the King stalked to bed, and so did mesdemoiselles the Princesses.

A plant had been pulled up with a mighty pother. For a day or two the earth would look ragged and unseemly. But Nature is decorous in the rapidity of her arrangements, and vegetation quick of growth. Fronds, cramped till now, would spread to cover the scar. The day after to-morrow you may look in vain to discover a trace of the change.

As Pamela laid a smiling cheek upon a virgin pillow, she reflected that there's nothing so becoming as mourning.

The nurses and the surgeons claimed their rights, and Sir Robert and Ranulph Medlicote, Esq., retired

to the apartment below to make preparations. For them there might be no sleep. There was much to see to, much to think of. Her Majesty, sighed the Minister, was to be congratulated on one point, whatever might be the vision of wonder that had been disclosed to her wandering spirit; for the wicked of this world had ceased to trouble her for ever. As for Sir Robert's prospects, they were undeniably the blacker for her flitting; his political future dark.

CHAPTER XI.

'BAB THROWS THE GAUNTLET.'

THE tolling of the bell of Paul's astonished the inhabitants of the vast hive which it commands, for the grave illness of the Queen had been concealed as much as possible. Folks closed their shops and chatted of events, but with no show of sorrow; for was not Caroline the wife of George, the mother of Frederick? Cincinnatus gave the messenger a crown who galloped with the news to Dawley. Anything which was likely to annoy the never-sufficiently-to-be-loathed one was welcome.

Bolingbroke was enchanted, and donned his gayest suit in honour of the event, waving airy fingers at breakfast to Pulteney opposite as they pledged each other in the daintiest Bohea. The latter was not quite so jubilant as his coadjutor, for had he not reason to know how artful was Bluestring, how full of ingenious resource. When surrounded by

skilfully prepared conflagrations from which there seemed no escape, did not his corpulent person skip out of the flames no more injured than a salamander? The great event would be useful in one way. There would be a general ungearing of wheels, of which it behoved clever plotters to take advantage. King and Ministers would be off their guard, would fall an easy prey. While engrossed with details of pomp and funeral they would not heed the movements of the enemy. Previous to the obsequies would not the whole swarm be gathered together, and might it not be well so to reorganize the plan as to catch them in the same trap? Better leave well alone.

Gervas had sent to say that he had reviewed the lists of captains and of men, had found many wavering, but had argued them into a proper frame of mind again; required but a couple of days or so to fill the inevitable gaps due to so many postponements. All was most promising, he wrote.

'The vacillating idiot!' was St. John's sneering commentary as he tossed down the billet. His Majesty from over the water should know who 'twas that buckramed up the weak-kneed donkey, and kept him to the sticking-place.

Newsboys with gazettes stuck in their hatbands sped to the suburban villages blowing of their horns.

'Mercy! what a hillaballoo!' cried the housewives, stopping in their labour to watch them scurrying. 'Was Thames afire, or the Tower burnt? Was the

enemy at Chatham; or why so unusual a disturbance?'

The lad, panting and out of breath, who knocked at the smug garden-gate of Mr. Crump, found the household in commotion. Honest Jack had not been home for two days past, having pencilled a message to his wife that events were passing in town which urgently needed his presence. Not that his absence, as he knew, could be a cause for aught but relief unto his spouse. What would his feelings have been could he have ridden home and beheld the tempest that was raging there? The sphynx-woman was risen out of torpor; the redhot brand which he knew he had left smouldering upon his hearth was performing the office that he dreaded. Bab with feeble step was pacing up and down in grievous agitation, with incoherent mutterings, wringing her hands. She had sent messages to Sir Robert—to St. James's, to Richmond—then despatched others to stop them; then sent them forth again. Domestics concluded that the reason of their mistress was disordered. She urgently required the presence of Sir Robert without the knowledge of her husband. How was this to be accomplished? Should she go herself? She was still weak, and on what plea could she intrude at St. James's when she knew that her Majesty was ill? And yet, this was no moment for paltry etiquette. At all hazards she must speak with Sir Robert, for she had done an

awful thing; had furnished the first clue for the betrayal of conspirators without knowing that Gervas was of the number.

Charlotte had sat in a maze all night, among the scattered contents of her box, unable to sort the strings within her distempered brain. Gervas had been good to her; had trusted her. He was in peril. Bab would be smitten by the same blow that struck him. A catastrophe was at hand which threatened the ruin of both. And this through her, the owner of the evil-eye, the infectious leper! What was she to do; how save Gervas for Barbara? 'Twas for Barbara's sake, knowing what she knew, that she had warned the Jacobite, had induced him to trust her with his papers; and by a fatality they had fallen into the very hands from which she would have rescued them. The Queen's indisposition so engrossed everyone in the palace, that the occupation of the friseur was gone. None heeded his head, or came clamouring for powder. Mr. Medlicote was so much upset as to forget for once his personal appearance; he remained in the ante-chamber all day, appearing from time to time in the drawing-room, answering courtiers' questions, reporting progress, dolefully describing symptoms. For the time being his female valet had passed out of his mind. During the anxious hours no one so much as changed their linen, or sat down to a regular meal.

Charlotte, unhinged, confused, wandered aimlessly in her master's apartment, listening to the hurry of feet, looking out on the occupants of the chairs and coaches who drew up their equipages at the corner of his Grace of Marlborough's to make inquiries. If Ranulph had come down she might, in her extremity, have confessed all, flinging herself at his feet, imploring assistance for the loved ones. But he did not come, and she was left to the chaos of her warped intellect.

Thus the early morning passed away, till, unable longer to endure the unwonted hush, the muffled movement, she seized her hat and sped to Kensington.

Barbara hearkened to her recital with eyes enlarged by terror, and tossing down the playbooks, struck her palms together. Doomed patriot! Was this the cause of his absence, of the infrequency of his visits? In spite of his better judgment he had been lured back into the toils, to be used as a tool by the crafty Bolingbroke! Himself so simple and straightforward, what an easy prey to such a wily fox!

And she had thought that it was over, that he had become convinced of the unworthiness of James! Had she realized that he was still one of the band, would she, could she, have acted differently?

What a position to be placed in! for, situated as they were, one or other of the two friends whom she

cared most for in the world must fall a sacrifice. Kind, bluff, blunt Sir Robert, or honest, dear Gervas. Yes, dear Gervas; for with the imminence of his peril came the conviction of how dear. And she had deemed herself so secure, so strong! Herself—always herself! Of what consequence was she to him—to anyone? The single tie that bound her to earth was snapped, thank Heaven! Yes, she was strong, for, regardless of self, she could devote herself to him.

In repeating the soldier's narrative she had done her duty, averting thereby a great crime.

Gervas must be saved, though how? Much mercy was to be expected at the hands of Honest Jack! How offensive was the thought of that arch-scoundrel!

Sir Robert, who was fond of her, who had confessed to a heavy debt of gratitude, must be told all. She would bare her breast to him, and claim his sympathy and help. She would say, 'Twice hath it been given to me to save your life: grant me his in return.'

How could he reject the appeal? He would not. But no time was to be lost, or further complications might arise, and it would be too late.

Thus was it that she despatched messengers, and summoned them back again, till, making up her mind at last, she bade Charlotte go, and privily lay wait for the Minister.

Obedient, and comforted in that she could be of service, Charlotte blithely embraced her friend, and trudged along the well-known rugged road, singing a merry stave. Entering by the accustomed postern she found the royal domestics in a dismal pickle, for the Pilgrim was there, and they did not like his presence.

There was no speaking with Sir Robert. What could Sir Charles want worrying at such a grievous time? There was nothing for it but to wait.

The bell of Paul's was lugubriously tolling, the newsboys were rushing with fluttering gazettes in the pale dawn ere Sir Robert, jaded with watching and anxiety, emerged from St. James's and walked slowly down the Mall.

Madam Crump desired to speak with him—at once — without her husband's knowledge? Sir Robert scanned with wonderment the cloud-flecks on the opal sky. Bless the little Whig! Had she obtained fresh clues? Was ever such a useful woman? But why without her husband's knowledge? It was urgent, was it—very urgent? Though like to drop he would go at once, then, if Sir Charles would fetch a coach.

Sure no artist, not even Mr. Hogarth's self, e'er limned so whimsical a picture of perplexity as was presented by Sir Robert while he listened to the disclosures of his favourite. That no goodness unalloyed exists on our terrestrial domain he had long

been positive; but he was so amazed at Barbara's tale that he sat mumchance, unable to express his feelings save by a prolonged whistle.

What next? Trusting to luck and the bars and bolts of St. Luke's, the demure and well-behaved secretary had deliberately committed bigamy, with his patron as a witness, in obedience to over-mastering passions. That a man might be driven to great lengths to obtain possession of the little Whig was not extraordinary; but this was going too far. And she, poor heart! With what torments of anguish and rage must she have been racked when the truth became apparent that she had been so tricked! No wonder she faded and drooped. No wonder that her babe had perished. That, at least, was a mercy. Poor Bab! poor Barbara Philpot!—for Barbara Crump she happily was not. As for Honest Jack—Honest Jack, indeed!—the designing, perfidious scamp should have cause to repent his temerity in sackcloth and ashes for all the remainder of his life.

But Barbara was not satisfied. What cared she for vengeance? Trembling with agitation, she kneeled by the sofa whereon the wearied Minister had thrown himself, and twined her arms about him. He would stand between Gervas and the open grave which he had dug with his own hands? For her sake, would he not? If Lord Forfar's head were to roll on the scaffold through act of hers, she would

lie down and die. She had suffered enough—more than enough—oh, had she not? Why did not Sir Robert speak—dear, good, kind Sir Robert—knowing that each second of delay in reassuring her was a stab in her quivering breast?

Walpole was exceedingly perturbed as he looked down into her wistful eyes. What was there in the man that could have earned so much love from such a woman?

'My pet, he is not worthy of you,' he said, with growing trouble. 'Think of the enormity of his offence!'

'Worthy or not, give him to me!' was all that Barbara would answer.

How unreasoning are women at the best, hurried into enormities and follies by the warmness of their little hearts, instead of being guided by their pretty heads! How could Sir Robert save this traitor? How could a sensible young lady expect him to rescue from the doom that he deserved, and was risking with eyes open, his most inveterate enemy? For he was more formidable, fitful though his activity might be—streaked with dreaminess and indecision—than brilliant spiteful Bolingbroke. The latter had inflicted many a wound with a pen dipped in gall; but what were these to the prowess of one who had almost succeeded in despatching a certain pursy gentleman to Barbadoes, and was now doing his utmost to enact a hellish drama of far more vast

proportions? A tragedy which involved the lives and liberties of all the Royal Family—no less!

Barbara must endeavour to display her usual sense. The saving of the Scottish lord was out of the question. Tower Hill clamoured for his blood; Traitor's Gate for his head. But she should be avenged for the wrong she had endured. Amply, swiftly avenged. And her future should be his grateful care. Extravagant spendthrift that she was. Money should not be lacking.

Money! What to her was money now?

'Urge me no more for my Lord Forfar,' he concluded. 'I could not save him if I would. If, as you say, the documents have in mercy been intercepted, we will e'en draw in the net, and with God's help will take them all.'

With a moan of despair Barbara sank upon the ground, but raised herself swiftly to her feet and became her stony self again upon hearing the ring of a horse's hoofs, and perceiving a hated figure. Sir Robert saw it too, through the open casement, and was more puzzled and embarrassed than before; for it suddenly occurred to him that if Jack had succeeded in capturing documents which might prove invaluable, how was Bab to be avenged? 'Twould be an ill-reward for the safety of a dynasty to plunge the doer of so signal a service into outer darkness! 'Twas woundily awkward; and after a solemn promise, too; and all he owed to Bab!

Sir Robert was so vexed by the turn things were taking, and his own helplessness, that the wrath was real which he poured forth upon his secretary when that worthy hastily entered. Mr. Crump turned white and shrank under his wife's scorn, and the hot words of his patron. It was all out, then! His patron saw him in his true colours at last, and would never trust him more. Confused by the suddenness of the attack he lost his presence of mind, standing with bent crest and shuffling feet like a culprit who acknowledges his guilt. All was not lost, however. How lucky had been that *trouvaille!* Barbara had blabbed, had thrown down the gauntlet of open warfare. Well, if they might not be friends, they would be foes. She must thank herself for the result. Since she was not to be a golden goose to him, he would be glad to be relieved of the incubus. But first the tables should be turned on her—scorn should be matched with scorn. He could snap his fingers in her face, for the service he had expected from the auriferous fowl was now in his own power to perform.

So soon as his patron ceased, he raised his head with a sinister look in his fishy eyes, and a proud curl about his lips, which disconcerted the Minister.

'You have heard, sir,' he said, with a gentleness that set Barbara's blood lashing, 'of Bethgellart? 'Tis a Welsh legend that oft repeats itself in real

life—a nursery tale of a faithful hound that was slain by his lord, in a fit of choler, for having done to death the heir whom in reality he had rescued from a wolf. My case is somewhat akin to that of the story.'

'The word of such a wretch should go for naught!' scoffed Barbara, 'for there is not a commandment but he hath broken it!'

'That I have wronged, grievously wronged, this lady, I do admit,' continued Jack, not heeding the interruption. 'But for an accident she never would have known, or the world either—the censorious intolerant world! But no more of that. Her indignation now is due not to the wrong, of which I in my great love was guilty—did she not condone it by long silence?—but to fear for the safety of her paramour. My zeal is my own undoing; for had I returned yesterday, I might, had I so willed it, have gagged her and prevented this. I am in your hands, Sir Robert Walpole—my benefactor whom I used to dare call friend. Whatever your verdict may be, I will bow to it without murmur, for 'tis fit I should be punished. I will leave your presence, but before I depart permit me to hand you this. I came on it but thirty hours ago; since then have been verifying facts, sifting details, filling breaks. The documents speak for themselves—with trumpet-tongues—of treason. Such fractures as there were my poor zeal hath mended. Here is the scheme complete; here

many receipts signed with the Pretender's own sign-manual in favour of the Lord Forfar. A promising scheme which would have been crowned, doubtless, with success, had you not the knowledge that will frustrate it.'

Mr. Crump had played his hand well, and knew it, as, standing deferentially behind Sir Robert, he glared with malignant triumph at her he had so injured. The brow of the Minister became corrugated with many wrinkles, as at last he drew a long breath and put the papers down. It was clear—appallingly clear. What an escape! Invaluable documents indeed, which must be acted on forthwith. 'Twas plaguy embarrassing, after the indignant tirades of a few minutes since, to have to stammer thanks.

Barbara, erect, with pinched lips and eyelids opened wide, and finger-nails driven into the palms, required all her courage and her pride to maintain a stately carriage. The dastardly wretch had triumphed before her face. The life-blood of Gervas was dripping drop by drop under her gaze, and she, as in a trance, was unable to stanch its flow. But Jack had yet another card, and played it. The death-warrant should be signed while she looked on; and then the pangs of jealousy he had endured, while spying the pair as they sat under the trees, would be assuaged—the outraged husband would be satisfied. War to the death, was it to be? Aha! have

at her, then! Who had thrown down the gauntlet?

'The chain, as you will perceive, sir,' quietly explained the secretary, 'lacks but one link. There is no list in yonder packet of officers or men who were to help in carrying out the plot, and yet such must exist. Those lists must be in the arch-traitor's hands, and if we take him unawares we find them. Vouchsafe me an order upon my Lord Cadogan, and keep this lady safe, and I'll guarantee to come on him ere nightfall. Then, my task done, I will surrender myself, and submit me to my punishment.'

Plague on the ardour of his zeal! there was too much on't. For Barbara's sake, the proud reserve of whose bearing smote him to the core, the good-natured Minister would have been content with less, though constrained to be lavish with applause. But what the man said was true; his suggestion was practical. Had not he, Sir Robert, always maintained that 'twas essential to snare the shoal, big fish as well as sprats—make such an example of the conspirators as should annihilate the cause of the Pretender? If Gervas could be taken red-handed with the lists in his pockets—though these tell-tale receipts here would provide his individual quietus—the dynasty of Hanover might live in peace for aye.

Dubiously, and with shame, he glanced appealingly

at his little Whig. To see her struggling with hopelessness was terrible, for she was as white as her Majesty within the palace. What stubborn fortitude to stand so still and straight with a dagger turning in her heart! And now to have to act on the secretary's idea—for, in sooth, maddened by love, she was capable of desperate deeds to ward off the impending blade; to have to say that, for a while, she must be a prisoner—the staunch little Whig, to whom he owed so much! Duty must be done, however painful. 'Twas most terrible! But how now? What change was this?

The blood had rushed to her temples, to the roots of her dark hair, in a hot flood; and then had ebbed again, leaving her pallor the more ashen.

Jack saw, and was startled; but she did not move—nor lips nor fingers quivered.

With a steady, unflinching flash and distended nostrils, she returned his suspicious scrutiny. She heard, as a long way off, through the singing in her ears, the stammered apologies of her old friend, bowed with chill courtesy to his excuses.

With a calm that was complete, she marked the writing on the tablets—the scarce legible pencil-tracery which she knew right well was a request to my Lord Cadogan to supply soldiers. For what? For the shooting down like a dog, if need were, of the man she loved. They were about to set the Grenadiers on him, like bloodhounds on a fugitive

slave. She neither moved, nor blenched, nor betrayed emotion, though pulses throbbed like hammers. Why? She had seen another thing but a few seconds since, and had sent up a thanksgiving to God—Charlotte, the ever-faithful, had passed on horseback out of the garden-gate, and had galloped off to London.

CHAPTER XII.

'HONEST JACK'S LAST CARD.'

ALL was not lost yet. Charlotte, her wits quickened by affection and canine instinct, no sooner beheld the inopportune arrival of Honest Jack, than, concealing herself in the bushes, she waited till he had passed, and then stole to the stable. There was no doubt about it; their mistress was distraught, cried the grooms. Such a scurrying and hurrying, and dashing out and back again; and now another nag required!

Charlotte was peremptory, however; for had not Barbara specially impressed upon Sir Charles that Sir Robert must not meet her husband? She dreaded the influence of the latter, then? And now he was here, as usual, to make mischief.

It was for the best that Charlotte had made first for Kensington. It now behoved her with wings upon her heels to find Gervas, and inform him of

the filching. Pray Heaven there was still time! 'Twas not yet noon; and, if haste were made, he would probably be still at the Bear.

'Twas well that Sir Charles was a good horseman. From Kensington to London is a long stretch, and the road bad for travel. As the slight rider spurred between the hedgerows, she laughed loud and long in the crisp exhilarating air, recalling an earlier day when she attacked her father as a highwayman. Stand and deliver! She saw him, kneeling quaking in the mire, drawing diamond rings off chalk-stoned fingers, while begging and whining for life—the cruel parent who had been so obdurate! He had never forgiven—never would forgive. 'Twas years since she had looked on that mass of vain affectation; for he was now so fine a gentleman as to boast a retinue of servants to screen him from low company.

In the mobile swiftness of alternating mood that characterized the wastrel, tears gushed forth from Charlotte's eyes in the midst of gleesomeness; but she dashed them aside, and set her teeth. Was not that to be done which would need all her steadiness? Unless Gervas were lodged in some place of safety, Bab would no longer love poor Madam Charke.

'Speed on, good nag; for precious lives—despair or happiness—depend upon thy fleetness. Forward like the wind!'

In spite of whip and spur, the mare slackened her pace—showed signs of manifest distress. She had cast a shoe. Was Fate resolved upon the Jacobite's undoing? The road along the Park was thick with pointed flints. Ha! yonder, by Hercules' Pillars, was a forge.

'Quick, quick, my master — use despatch! A guinea for thy quickness! Wake up, thou drone!'

'Heyday!' grumbled the blacksmith. 'A collector, I warrant, with the myrmidons of Colonel de Veil upon his track. In broad daylight, too! Rash but jolly gentlemen; how great was their temerity! This spark a boy!—Rest awhile,' he whispered, winking an eye; for collectors were good customers. 'Thy nag can be concealed at back, and will be all the better for a rest. For thyself a mug of ale; and hey for the road at nightfall!'

'Quick, man! What dost think am I?' cried frantic Charlotte. 'A mole—a slug! 'Tis a case of life or death, I say. I'll bring thee another guinea. Use despatch!'

'Well, well! Roystering hot-tempered sparks, these gentry of the highway! But they pay handsomely.'

Quivering with impatience, Sir Charles glanced from time to time out of the window lest Crump should be pursuing. He would soon discover the flight, and guess its purport. Would this slow

fellow never have ceased fumbling? Make haste! Golden moments had been lost; but no sign as yet of Crump. Could he have taken the other road?

Tossing the guinea down—how lucky to have had one!—Charlotte sped off again down Piccadilly, through Leicester Fields, along the road that led by the Old Bourne.

A cold, bright day. Cits, well-wrapped in Witney broadcloth, were conversing of the Queen. Around the oyster-tubs, which stood in rows along Fleet Ditch, small knots were gathered; and the wenches plied their knives as one upon a settle, with horn-spectacles on nose, read scraps from the gazette. City beaux elbowed for a place within ear-shot, regardless of the barber's greasy apron, the chandler's tallow basket, the vicinity of baker or sweep. Even the shoeblacks left their accustomed corners to join the attentive throng, and jostled stout housewives in wooden clogs, with hoods and oiled umbrellas.

'Sad pity 'twas not the King or Prince of Wales,' a butcher openly avowed; 'for the woman, 'twas said, was the best of the party, though that was not saying much.'

Charlotte clattered forward, leaving lamentation in her wake, as disconcerted applewomen scuttled within the posts to avoid the reckless rider. 'Is the devil at thy tail, or the Pretender?' they yelled.

The Pretender! nearer than they thought, might be.

Galloping on, the horseman never slackened rein till the houses on the bridge were visible—like a row of uneven teeth.

Thank Heaven, Gervas was not gone—was standing in riding-boots on the steps of the hostelry! Five minutes more, and he would have been off; and, returning, have fallen into a snare. With darkening brow, he led the way to his chamber. Why such fiery haste? 'Twas like one speeding for a surgeon.

'No time to be lost!' panted Charlotte, out of breath. 'Your papers have been filched by Crump—are now in the hands of Walpole.'

Lord Forfar sank into a chair, revolving this startling news. Truly the hand of Heaven was against King James! Nothing prospered that his adherents did for him. Filched by Crump! In the hands of Walpole! It was finished then—they were undone—there was nothing left but flight.

How much was known?—all! The suddenness of the collapse of the long-cherished plan rendered the Jacobite sick and dizzy. He sat still, with eyes fixed upon the floor, marvelling. The edifice which had taken so much labour and skill to build, was sent crashing with a finger-touch.

'Waste not a moment,' urged Charlotte. 'Though I came with speed, I was delayed by accident. The

watermen hereabout will do anything to oblige Sir Charles. We will drop down to Gravesend, and take refuge in some vessel.'

Crashed, fallen, an inextricable heap of disaster! What of the other conspirators? In those papers concealed at Charlotte's were letters addressed to Bolingbroke; nothing, that Gervas remembered, to implicate Pulteney. But both must receive notice. It should never be said that he made good his own escape, leaving comrades in peril. Would Charlotte ride to Dawley? No. Her horse could not go another step. Besides, my Lord Bolingbroke was naught to her, whose mission was to watch over Lord Forfar. Strange. Her mission? By whose command? To whom could it signify——?

'Haste! haste!' implored Charlotte. 'If not for your own sake, for hers—sweet Barbara—who but a few hours ago was well-nigh distracted at your danger. Blind! Could not you guess she loved you, that 'twas for hopeless love of you she grew mad, and went to ruin?'

Gervas was thunderstruck. The riddle was solved that had appeared inexplicable. For love of him! What a long scroll of amazement was unrolled by Charlotte's words! Barbara loved him! Beautiful enchanting Barbara! His head was in a whirl. It took a rough shake from his companion to bring him back to earth. She loved him, cared whether he lived or perished. What might not the future have

in store behind the thunderous clouds? He would flee—for her sake he would flee; but those others must be warned. In case of things going wrong a signal had been arranged. No need to rave and rail, Sir Charles. The landlord will send a messenger, bearer of this signet. Bolingbroke will understand. A few papers to burn, and then away.

While he made hurried preparations Charlotte kept vigilant watch, standing concealed by a curtain at a corner of the balcony. Heaven was merciful. No sign of Crump; and yet, long ere this, thanks to that accursed misfortune which checked her career, he must have made the discovery. The horse must have been missed from the stable. Had Bab been able to delay him? Perhaps tears and prayers had prevailed upon Sir Robert, and yet that was little probable. This heap of burnt ashes on the hearth would tell no tale. A hurried word or two to the landlord, and Gervas was ready. Charlotte uttered an exclamation. What was that yonder—glinting between the houses upon London Bridge? Scarlet coats, white crossbelts. Sure even Crump's malice would shrink at marching the Grenadiers into the sanctuary? Why! Montagu Close—the Mint—the festering purlieus about the prisons would rise as one man in defence of privilege! And yet 'twas even so. He must be mad; for not one of that brave handful would return to tell the story. They were steadily tramping to their death. For all that,

Gervas must not be found. He must take a wherry and shoot the rapid under the arch by the water-wheels, and make for Execution Dock. There he could live safe till such time as caution might dictate. Quick! Past the one-eyed tavern into the alley which led into the Close. There were a dozen wherries lying at the stairs. Ha! Glory Kilburne, what a fortunate rencontre! Sure he remembered Sir Charles, brother of the lady who lay a-dying, and was married from his garret?

Peering anxiously, Charlotte recognised none of the watermen she knew; but Glory knew them all —which might be trusted, unheedful of their necks? Their guerdon would be ample.

The two companions leaped into a boat; the rowers pushed out into the stream. Ah! 'twas a ruse of crafty Crump's—a trap! A low whistle. The soldiers halted on the bridge. Another boat that had lain concealed by abutting steps and houses, manned by eight oarsmen, followed into the open and gave chase.

The stratagem was a clever one, worthy of Honest Jack. He knew that if his prey had been warned and was yet at the Bear, he would take to the water at sight of the uniform. With his eight rowers he could overtake a wherry. And yet 'twas doubtful, as the event proved; for the smaller boat was light, the larger heavy with soldiers. Jack himself was in it, for his broad shoulders stood out

against the light as he rose and gesticulated in excitement.

Urged by promises, his rowers pulled with a will, while their oars bent like osiers.

'Well done, my men!' screamed Jack. 'You're gaining fast. Soldiers, ready! A volley from the bridge should send that nutshell to the bottom.'

But Gervas, alert now, saw his only chance. In a moment he would be between two fires. To catch the force of the stream Crump's boat kept well into the open towards the other shore.

'Double back,' whispered Lord Forfar. 'We can reach the Cock steps before they overtake us, and be lost in the purlieus of the Clink. Steady it is! Now!'

Crump beat the powder from his hair in mortification, as he marked the manœuvre, and but for an outstretched hand would have pitched into the water. The enemy had met mine with countermine. 'Twas a moment ere his crew could stem the current, while the other had the advantage of the lee-gauge, and speedily reached the steps, where Glory and the inhabitants of the Close were gathered in a ferment. As a red rag to a bull was the sight of the scarlet coat. Even the women had streamed out with tongs and stools, a band of outraged amazons, while one, bellowing above the rest, prated of hearths and homes. Children had been utilized, being fleet of foot, to carry the tidings to the

Mint. What! Were the sanctuaries that had been established, some of them, as early as the second Henry to be set at naught by a handful of rag-carriers? A pretty precedent! A parcel of red-coated, empty-stomached scaramouches! The doughty boys of Southwark must have lost caste indeed to be so flouted. A growl as of an angry sea resounded along Thames Bank. As if by magic a tatterdemalion rabblement emerged from den and ally, waving swart fists, while hoarse menace thundered from a hundred sinewy throats. A posse of seamen, too, from Petty Burgundy and a band of Bermondsey smugglers, stirred by the unwonted scarlet on the bridge, appeared upon the scene. In the Mint the word went forth that the signal had been given, the order issued, 'To the Tower!'

At sight of the Hearts of Oak (turbulent and unruly always when on shore), of the sable flood descending St. Margaret's Hill, the captain in command of the Grenadiers saw that he was lost; but his orders were explicit, and he held his ground, till, swept by the rushing tide, he and his men were hurled over the parapet to be stranded far to seaward. 'Twas a brief but dreadful conflict, in which men fought with teeth and hands, with bloodshot eyes and veins like whipcord, breathing hard. Flung into the rapid flood, the men must drown in their accoutrements.

Frenzied, rabid with the thought that his enemy

was slipping from him, Crump gave the order to land. Had he not marked upon Sir Robert's face pity and concern for that scornful statue-woman? Now that the secret was out, she would get round him and win the life of his foe. Never! He had promised, dead or alive, to produce the arch-conspirator—to hound him to the scaffold.

'Get ye in,' cried Glory Kilburne, 'to my house; there ye'll be safe while we choke this riff-raff.'

In truth, 'twas the least sane of acts on the part of Mr. Crump, but from its very rashness it produced its effect upon the rabble.

'A thousand guineas for that man! Let him not escape!' shrieked Jack, beside himself, as, diving under a dozen arms, and parting the swaying mob, he pursued the Jacobite half-way up the Close, slipping on the flags.

The two came together and wrestled. Jack was strong, and younger than Gervas. Though he might not escape himself, he would do to death his enemy. Come what would, Barbara should not have him.

Gervas's breath came thick—he was half strangled. Jack gnashed his teeth with fury. Though strongest, he stood in a whirlpool that threatened to bear him down. Quick as thought, Charlotte plucked a pistol that a smith was brandishing, and watching her chance, fired.

The grip about Lord Forfar's waist relaxed—the

body of Honest Jack slid among the decaying offal on the steps, where, limp, unnerved, inert, it lay, head downwards.

On the threshold of Glory Kilburne's humble dwelling, where that wrong had been done to her dear Barbara, Charlotte despatched the soul of Honest Jack to answer for its many sins.

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The inconvenient zeal of Sir Robert's secretary in bearding the Southwark boys was much blamed at Court, though, thanks to him, impending Incubus had melted into air. His body, mangled and trodden into shapelessness, was tossed into the Thames, and swirling round, was caught by its skirt upon the water-wheel, whence it was in due time dislodged by the hand of the common scavenger.

There was a panic—a *sauve qui peut*—a scuttling of persons with tender consciences, whose departure for France or Holland caused marvel, so little were some of them suspected of leanings towards the Chevalier. Everyone breathed freely as if wakening from nightmare; for the adage, if a threadbare, is a true one, that prates of enduring the ills we wot of.

On receiving the signet my Lord Bolingbroke disappeared. The farm of Cincinnatus was open, a roosting-place for owls, a home for dogs and cats. No one knew whither he had flown, or by what means, until by-and-by it transpired that a single horseman

had ridden across lone Lambeth Marsh to the Dog and Duck in George's Fields, where, curiously, he had got into a chair in a riding-suit, and drawing down the blinds, had been carried into Southwark. Being stopped by sundry lawless blades, the chairmen said that 'twas a smallpox patient on his road to Mr. Guy's new hospital, and so they were allowed to pass.

When next heard of his lordship was in Paris, more splendid than ever in his attire; which was only what might have been expected, for was not Paris the Temple of La Mode, and my lord her assiduous votary?

My Lord Forfar also vanished, and the Bear knew him no more. Charlotte, however, exceedingly tattered and mud-stained, arrived at Kensington on the day of the royal funeral, with radiant countenance, and whispered that the fugitive was safe.

From the moment when Glory Kilburne arrived with a cart bearing the battered remains of him who had been called her husband, Barbara retired into seclusion, a grave unsmiling woman. With weak human hands she had battled and buffeted, to be worsted in every encounter. There was something awful, therefore, in the sudden interposition of a higher Will, of the issuing of a mandate without overt act of hers, 'Thou hast suffered enough—Peace!'

The funeral of the Queen over, Sir Robert drove

to the familiar house to commune with his little Whig. Though he had lost a friend, his heart was light. The tragic fate of the secretary relieved him from a peck of difficulties.

'I kissed the hand of his Majesty,' he related, 'who was most affable. All will go well. Chesterfield is perishing from spite, and so is Pulteney; while as for St. John, I'll bet my best periwig he hath the jaundice! All the world knows by this time that Sophia von Walmoden will be received at Dover in a month with salvoes of artillery, and will be created Countess of Yarmouth. She and I, who have concluded a private treaty, offensive and defensive, will be fast friends, and steer the ship together. By the way, do you know that your dear good sister is to be married shortly? Ranulph, who is not given to being straitlaced, disapproves of the Walmoden, and with a new wife and a peerage will commence a new existence. He'll be miserable, but may not be persuaded. "Nature finds us so well matched," he says, "that she will not let us live asunder." Obstinate mules must gang their gait.'

Walpole paused, for Barbara's thoughts were far away.

'What of yourself, my pet?' he inquired presently. 'Thinking of him, while I cackle over my heap of nonsense. You will keep to your engagement, and return to Drury Lane?'

Bab shook her head.

'Not now. Next year, perhaps. It matters not,' she answered drearily.

'Occupation of the mind,' returned wise Sir Robert, 'is what you need to restore your moral tone. The horizon's clear. Come! admit I'm not so black as St. John paints me!' laughed the Minister, with his gruff guffaw, as he patted his favourite's cheek. 'When their talons are pared I can forgive my enemies, which is more than he can do. Let bygones be bygones, as Chartres said, when dying, of his numerous iniquities. Your Scotchman may come back whensoever he listeth. There, what do you say to that? For your sake he shall be unmolested; but you must engage to muzzle him. I'm too old and gouty to journey to the Indies. Why not go and fetch him? A trip abroad would do you good, instead of moping here.'

His little Whig smiled sadly. She, the unquiet, needed rest, not movement; was in the state of bruised prostration which bids the world-worn to seek the quiet of the cloister.

The care of poor Sir Charles would occupy her mind and time, she said; for the scurry of that tussle by Thames-side had deranged the weak intellect yet further. That she had been privileged to do a transcendent service to her dear patroness she was aware, and her heart was flooded with joy; for, as it seemed, the curse of Colley was raised, the ban of the evil-eye removed.

This being so, she consented without protest to dwell henceforth with Barbara, and sat crooning away the sunlit hours with quaint scraps of song and artless ditties. Lest she should hurry off again, a brand-new puppet-motion had been obtained for her, and a choice collection of stuffs for the re-furbishing of their Majesties of Sheba and Assyria, and dear Hero and sweet Leander.

'What fudge was this?' gibed irreverent Sir Robert. 'Was Barbara Philpot—beauteous Queen of Hearts—to end her days in the coif and apron of a nurse? A pretty conclusion for a tragic muse! Unless she promised to think better of it he, Sir Robert, would connive with my Lord Byron, who by this time must be tired of Madam Theo, and whisk her off in a coach.—But I need not fash myself,' he concluded, chuckling. 'You'll change your mind of your own accord, claiming the prerogative of woman.'

He was right in his surmise, though Bab never deserted Charlotte. A letter arrived one day from France, which, without a word spoken, she placed in the hands of the Minister.

'Did I not tell thee that the sky was clear?' cried he, with a hearty kiss. 'Take my advice, child, and the good that the gods send thee; though, sure, 'twill be a miracle for a Whig to be happy with a Jacobite!'

And so it came about that lights were twice lighted upon Hymen's altar.

For different reasons both Ranulph and Gervas resolved to turn their backs on politics.

Pamela—despite the gaudy brightness of the brand-new coronet for which her soul had hankered—found a crumpled rose-leaf in her bed; for was not hated Bab to become my Lady Forfar?

'The slut is welcome to my worn-out old shoes!' she said, tossing her chin; while Ranulph laughed. 'In six months they'll regret their bargain.'

One was a quiet marriage, with no witnesses save Sir Robert Walpole, Sir Charles, and honest Glory Kilburne. The other pair were tied in splendid style, assisted by half the peerage. Concerning one pair the world had little to say; concerning the other they gabbled for a fortnight.

Pamela and Ranulph were privileged to join equipages, fortunes, titles, and expense; while Bab and her partner were united as well in these as in virtue and sorrow and affection.

THE END.

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